The Impact of Mindfulness Meditation on Educator Growth and Professional Development: A Personal Account

Nicole Patton, B.A.

Department of Graduate and Undergraduate Studies in Education

Submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education

Faculty of Education, Brock University
St. Catharines, Ontario

Abstract

This study examined the use of mindfulness meditation in educator growth and professional development. The purpose was to create recommendations for an effective mindfulness meditation practice for educators. To this end, as the researcher is an educator as well as an experienced mindfulness meditation practitioner, the research methodology was self-study through narrative inquiry. The exploration of mindfulness meditation on the researcher's personal and professional development was viewed through the lenses of Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Mezirow's transformational learning theory. These theories provided an analytical framework that guided this research. Themes were drawn from the exploration and connected with academic literature. The results were a mindfulness meditation framework for educators that is based on the Socratic Method, and utilizes the conceptual frameworks of Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Mezirow's transformational learning theory.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank my husband and children for supporting me during this research project. Without their understanding and their willingness to let me work during periods that would have normally been family time, this project would not have become a reality. I also wish to thank my sister who has been a constant source of support and encouragement throughout the years.

I also wish to thank my advisor Nicola Simmons for guiding me through this process. Her faith and wisdom was always present, particularly during moments when the path was not clear. Her mentorship and flexibility allowed me to stay true to this project. I also wish to acknowledge and thank Tony Di Petta, my second reader, who provided me with sound advice and guidance.

Finally, I would like to offer this effort to all those people who suffer from the effects of anxiety and stress. The door to healing was opened for me in my first yoga class over 16 years ago, and I am forever grateful to my yoga teacher for introducing me to mindfulness meditation.

Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgments	iii
List of Tables	vi
List of Figures	vii
Prologue	viii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	
What Is Mindfulness Meditation	2
Background of the Problem	3
Purpose of the Study	6
Objectives	7
Conceptual Framework	7
Outline of Chapters	11
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	13
Mindfulness Meditation	13
Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs	21
Critical Reflection	30
Summary	41
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS	43
Research Methodology and Design	43
Research Participant	44
Data Collection	45
Data Analysis	45
Accuracy of the Findings and Interpretations	46
Scope and Limitations	47
Ethical Considerations	48
Summary	49
CHAPTER FOUR: MY JOURNEY	50
Background	50
Physiological Needs	53
Safety Needs	54
Belongingness and Love	60
Esteem Needs	63
Self-Actualization	66
Self-Transcendence	71
Summary	76
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION	78
The Elements of Nature and Silence	78
Guiding Principles	82
Model of Self-Reflection	84
Summary	88

Future Research 89
Lessons Learned 90
Final Word 91
References 93

List of Tables

Table **Page**

1. Model of Self-Reflection 86

List of Figures

Figure	Page
1. Maslow's hierarchy of needs	10
2. Mezirow's transformative learning theory.....	40

Prologue

The time will come
when, with elation,
you will greet yourself arriving
at your door, in your own mirror,
and each will smile at the other's welcome

and say, sit here. Eat.
You will love again the stranger who was yourself.
Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart
to itself, to the stranger who has loved you

all your life, whom you have ignored
for another, who knows you by heart.
Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,

the photographs, the desperate notes,
peel your own image from the mirror.
Sit. Feast on your life.

~ Love After Love (Walcott, 1987)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

> It is both the work and the adventure of a lifetime not to be trapped in either our past or our ideas and concepts, but rather to reclaim the only moment we ever really have, which is this one. Taking care of this moment can have a remarkable effect on the next one and therefore the future—yours and the world's. If you can be mindful in this moment, it is possible for the next moment to be hugely and creatively different—because you are aware and not imposing anything on it in advance. (Kabat-Zinn, 2012, p. 16)

This study examines the use of mindfulness meditation in educator growth and professional development. Mindfulness meditation is defined as "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4). Mindfulness meditation can be used as a reflective stance as "paradoxically, time spent in contemplative mindfulness, stepping back from insistent probing into a still, calm space, may allow increased clarity and focus on problems worthy of inquiry" (Webster-Wright, 2013, p. 556). Mindfulness meditation thus serves as a tool to support educator development and reflective practice (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Kabat-Zinn believes that humans are prone to falling into an autopilot style of living in which we break contact with what is deepest in ourselves, and what affords us the greatest opportunities for creativity, learning, and growth. Therefore, mindfulness meditation may allow educators to make more conscious decisions about their teaching and offer an opportunity to critically reflect on their habits, patterns, and assumptions associated with their practice.

For clarity, the word *educator* will be used in this context to refer to anyone who is educating others. Educators are encouraged to reflect upon their practice to foster

professional growth and development in the field of education (Hubball, Collins, & Pratt, 2005). There are numerous ways to engage in reflection; however, as Hubball et al. (2005) point out, there is more to reflective practice than simply engaging in workshops or training. Knowing the students and the subjects depends heavily on self-knowledge; similarly, if we do not know ourselves, we cannot know who our students are (Palmer, 1998).

This study focuses on the role of mindfulness meditation in educator growth and professional development as a vehicle for promoting self-awareness and reflection on practice. The word *growth* is used here as a way to represent change that occurred as a result of experiences or situations encountered. I explored this topic through a personal lens, drawing on my experience as an educator and a mindfulness meditation practitioner, and using a self-study through narrative inquiry methodology. Based on an exploration of my experiences with mindfulness meditation, my teaching, and connecting to the academic literature, I recommend elements for an effective mindfulness meditation practice for educators.

What Is Mindfulness Meditation?

Mindfulness meditation is defined as "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4). If we can bring our mind into the present moment in a non-judgemental way, "we become aware of what is happening, right here and now, in our body, mind and wider world; accepting feelings, thoughts and situations for what they are without minimising or exaggerating features of our present experience" (Webster-Wright, 2013, p. 559). The practice of mindfulness meditation therefore offers the opportunity to open up a broad perspective on a problem and lead to clarity of intent (Webster-Wright, 2013). It is

believed that the kind of awareness that mindfulness meditation can help develop or support can strongly benefit professionals' reflective practice experiences (Dawson, 2003; Webster-Wright, 2013; Zajonc, 2006), making it a valuable adjunct to educator professional development.

Background of the Problem

There are high demands in the workplace today and people feel the resulting associated stress and pressure (Posen, 2013; Rezek, 2012; Santorelli, 2011; Yeganeh, 2012). The high-demands culture and associated stress is nowhere more evident than in the education profession (Miller, 2014). Self-reflection and personal awareness are often touted as important tools for educators in coping with stress and in developing professional practice. While reflective practice is highlighted as imperative to educator professional development (Demulder & Rigsby, 2003; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Hubball et al., 2005; Jones & Jones, 2013) and is intended to support professional development, how effective is the reflection or self-reflection if the educator is overwhelmed by stress and pressure?

There is a growing need in our society to better manage stress and pressure and also foster calm and resilience (Meiklejohn et al., 2012; Posen, 2013). It has been well established through the literature that one is able to better manage stress if there is a commitment to mindfulness meditation (Baer, Carmody & Hunsinger, 2012; Brown, Marquis, & Guiffrida, 2013; Brown & Ryan, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Keune & Forintos, 2010). What is the impact of stress on one's ability to engage in an effective reflective practice? This section will explore the impact of stress and space for silence.

The Impact of Stress

A challenge facing workplaces today is the impact of stress on performance

(Posen, 2013; Rezek, 2012; Yeganeh, 2012). Selye (1976) first popularized the term *stress* in the 1950s based on his observations of patients recovering from illness or surgery. Stress is present in our lives, all the time, and in different forms including physiological, psychological, and social (Posen, 2013). Although society often refers to stress as a negative element, stress is actually a natural part of life and cannot be avoided (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). In fact, we need stress at times to heighten awareness in certain situations (Posen, 2013).

The primary challenge with stress is how we cope with it—what Selye (1976) called *diseases of adaptation*. Diseases of adaptation are "our actual attempts to respond to change and to pressure, no matter what their particular source, which might in themselves lead to breakdown and disease if they are inadequate or disregulated" (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, p. 237). The individual determines whether a situation is considered stressful (Cox & Mackay, 1985; Posen, 2013). In our world today, the rate of change is fast and is often outside of our control (Bridges, 1991; Hiatt & Creasey, 2012; Posen, 2013). It is up to the person to accept the change, adjust to it, and move on (Posen, 2013). This suggests that people must have a strong ability to cope with the stressors associated with their work in order to be healthy and successful.

What happens when the level of stress grows too high for an individual to cope with? Posen (2013) believes that we all have a tipping point. He defines this as "the stress people can withstand before that undefined moment when the pressure exceeds their tolerance and they become exhausted, collapse or snap" (p. 45). Feeling as though there is too much to do and not enough time to do it seems to be a common theme. How do we keep the love in our work when the expectations leave one drained and unable to manage

the demands? Palmer, for example, stated that "our way of knowing, indeed, grows into a way of living" (as cited in Zajonc, 2006, p. 1744). This statement suggests that if we allow the impacts of stress to take over our lives, this in turn will become our entire experience. Mindfulness meditation offers the opportunity to mitigate the impact of stress.

The Space for Silence

Education is driven by extroversion and activities that value and emphasize extroversion (Cain, 2012). Many people are constantly electronically connected (Heydenfeldt, Herkenhoff, & Coe, 2011; Posen, 2013; Yeganeh, 2012). We are surrounded by social media, noise, and the opportunity for distraction much of the time. If this is the dominant mode of our society, how does this impact those educators who by nature require quiet or calm for reflective practice? What is possible when we add in the polar opposite—silence—as a factor in reflective practice?

It is important to note that many reflective practice activities for educators include aspects of introspection and quiet. Some recommendations include journaling, written narratives, or art as a means of expressing learning (Asselin, 2011; Norton, Russell, Wisner, & Uriarte, 2011; Simmons & Daley, 2013). The dominant mode of our society, however, is one of noise and haste, rather than space and silence (Dawson, 2003, Kabat-Zinn, 2012). It can be a conscious and deliberate effort to turn away from the distractions, in order to engage in a meaningful reflective practice.

Some people require silence when they are concentrating or when they need to regain energy (Cain, 2012). Educators emphasize critical reflection and creativity; however, it seldom creates the space for silence that some teachers require for a deep and

nourishing reflective practice (Dawson, 2003). Dawson (2003) states "one of the biggest challenges facing educators today is how to create the necessary conditions to foster the kind of contemplative silence that nourishes the creative impulse lying at the heart of significant learning and living (p. 33). For many educators, silence is an important element for reflection and thoughtful work.

From a personal standpoint, I have had the most meaningful reflective practice experiences when presented with pure silence and without opportunity for distraction. Miller (2014) offers that "as the noise increases, silence beckons" (p. 3). He uses this statement in reference to the times when one is confronted with constant, unrelenting external stimuli; some find the need to turn inward and to connect with others, the earth, and the cosmos in an embodied way.

The challenge is nurturing the educational environments around us to support mindfulness meditation. A reconceptualization of teaching needs to occur in order for educators to fully embrace this practice. In our modern society, more individuals fear stillness (Camahalan, 2006), and "contemplation seems alien to modern life" (Miller, 2014, p. 3). Our tumult of competing demands and constant distractions creates an environment that supports short attentions spans and a frantic, breathless pace (Salzberg, 2014; Webster-Wright, 2013). What possibilities exist for an educator when they learn to embrace silence and reconnect with themselves?

Purpose of the Study

This study examines the use of mindfulness meditation in educator growth and professional development. In considering this topic, I investigated several interrelated inquiry questions. In essence, I explored my experiences with mindfulness meditation

and how the interaction of mindfulness meditation, professional experience, and reflection shaped my personal and professional development. On a personal level, did these experiences transform me, or challenge me in my development as a human being? On a professional level, how did mindfulness meditation support me as an Educator?

In considering these questions I utilized the theoretical frameworks of Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of basic needs as well as Mezirow's (1990) transformative learning theory. These theories provided analytical structure to the broad questions I was investigating. Ultimately, I used my explorations of the above questions to inform my recommendations for an effective mindfulness meditation practice for educators.

Objectives

This research project set out to accomplish the following objectives:

1. Explore the role of mindfulness meditation on my personal and professional development.
2. Based on an exploration of my experiences, make recommendations for an effective mindfulness meditation practice for educators.

This study reports my findings and conclusions on these objectives. To assist with this, the review of the literature in Chapter 2 will focus on mindfulness meditation, critical reflection, and educator development. I also drew on the principles of self-study through narrative inquiry to make connections between my experience with mindfulness meditation and what I discovered through the literature review.

Conceptual Framework

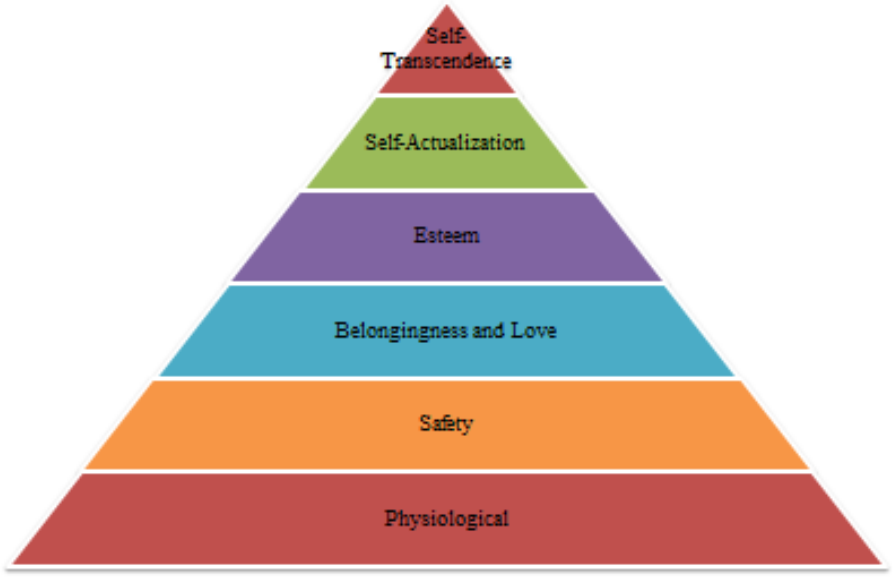
The conceptual frameworks used for this research is Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of basic needs as well as Mezirow's (1990) transformative learning theory. These two

theories offered structure and focus when exploring the answers to questions that are quite broad in nature. More specifically, Maslow's hierarchy of needs provided me with a way to assess and identify personal and professional development throughout the years. Mezirow's transformative learning theory enabled me to look deeper into these stages and pinpoint which experiences made me engage in critical reflection, ultimately leading to discourse—and potentially, change.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Basic Needs

Maslow (1968) offered a theory of human motivation whereby he suggested a hierarchy of five basic needs that all humans have the opportunity to move through. In the latter part of his research he began discussing a sixth need which is self-transcendence (Koltko-Rivera, 2006). Maslow (1968) believed that people are impacted by their situations and experiences. Depending on the outcome of these experiences, one can move up or down the hierarchy.

The basic need for all humans in Maslow's theory is physiological and if this need is not met, one is unable to progress any further (Maslow, 1968). The next need is safety whereby people seek psychological security and freedom from fear. The next stage in the hierarchy, belongingness and love, is met through relationships with others and a feeling of connection with a group. Feelings of esteem emerge as the next stage through opportunities to gain self-esteem and respect for oneself and from others. Self-actualization is the stage when someone is doing what they believe they are meant to do. Self-transcendence, the most recent stage added to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, stands at the top of the pyramid and represents the need to rise above self to strive for a higher truth.



Adapted from Maslow's Hierarchy of Basic Needs (1968)

Figure 1. Maslow's hierarchy of needs

There are limitations to this theory which will be discussed in detail in chapter two. The main challenge that has been discussed in the literature is the lack of empirical testing on this model (Kohn, 2004; Soper, Milford, & Rosenthal, 1995; Wahba & Bridwell, 1976). Wahba and Bridwell (1976), for example, state that "it has almost become a tradition for writers to point out the discrepancy between the popularity of the theory and the lack of clear and consistent empirical evidence to support it (p. 212). Despite the lack of evidence to support this model, it is still highly cited, utilized, and accepted as a theory of human motivation (Neher, 1991; Soper et al., 1995; Wahba & Bridwell, 1976).

Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory

Mezirow (1997) defines transformative learning as the process by which we influence change within a *frame of reference*. Frames of reference are a body of experience—concepts, values, feelings, and conditioned responses that define an adult's world (Cranton & King, 2003; Mezirow, 1997). Mezirow (1997) further delineates this concept and includes two dimensions: *habits of mind* and *points of view*. It is his belief that habits of mind are habitual ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that are influenced by assumptions. These assumptions operate like a set of codes that have been pieced together throughout one's life. Points of view are more flexible than habits of mind; they are subject to change as we reflect on new knowledge or something that has happened (Mezirow, 1997). Our frames of reference are ultimately quite strong, and influence the way we interact with the world.

In order to transform our frames of reference we need to engage in critical reflection and discourse. Discourse is defined by Mezirow (1997) as a "dialogue devoted to assessing reasons presented in support of competing interpretations, by critically

examining evidence, arguments and alternative points of view" (p. 6). Discourse and critical reflection on the assumptions to which they are based will lead the process of transformation.

Tennant (1993) offers a critique of this model. He believes that Mezirow's theory places too much emphasis on the individual and overlooks the social dimension involved. Tennant states that "Mezirow does not sufficiently explore the social origins of the life course, which leads him to consider examples of what I would call *normative* psychological development as instances of perspective transformation" (p. 34). Mezirow (1994) counters this critique and believes that developmental shifts and development progress are one and the same. He believes there is no strong evidence to support differentiating between transformative adult learning and adult development.

Despite the critical lens on both of these models they are widely accepted theories in academic literature. These two theories offer the opportunity to investigate the impact of mindfulness meditation on my personal and professional development in a more meaningful way. Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of basic needs provides a structure to identify how mindfulness meditation impacted my growth and professional development, and a means of discussing the importance of these experiences in relation to my life and career. As I moved higher in the hierarchy of needs, Mezirow's (1990) framework enabled me to identify those moments that were truly transformational, and analyse the outcomes of these experiences.

Outline of Chapters

This study examines the use of mindfulness meditation in educator growth and professional development. In this chapter I highlighted the need for educators to address

the stressors in personal and professional lives and suggested that a key vehicle for dealing with stress in education is by reducing the noise, cultivating silence, and using mindfulness meditation. Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Mezirow's transformative learning theory were also presented as the conceptual framework for this project.

In chapter 2, I review the literature on the topic of the use of mindfulness meditation in educator growth and professional development. I examine the primary themes of mindfulness meditation, mindfulness meditation in education, reflective practice, and the conceptual frameworks of Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Mezirow's transformational learning theory. This chapter will provide a foundational basis for the exploration into my personal experiences with mindfulness meditation, and the link to educator development.

In chapter 3, I present the methodology and procedures for the research. In this chapter I draw on the principles of self-study through narrative inquiry, and explain the reasons behind choosing this methodology. Details regarding data collection and data analysis will be discussed, as well as the scope and limitations of this research project.

In chapter 4, I present the exploration of my personal experiences with mindfulness meditation. This will be done through an analysis of my experiences as connected to Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs and Mezirow's (1990) transformational learning theory.

In chapter 5, I discuss the implications of this research, and further explore the linkages between the literature and my experiences. Potential avenues for future research are also highlighted. Finally, I include some closing thoughts on this topic and lessons that were learned from this research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This study examined the use of mindfulness meditation in educator growth and professional development. I am an educator, as well as, an experienced mindfulness meditation practitioner, and the research methodology chosen for this project uses the framework of Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of basic needs and Mezirow's (1990) transformational learning theory as lenses for self-study through narrative inquiry. The objectives of this research are twofold. First, the study examines the role of mindfulness meditation on my personal and professional development, and posits the usefulness of mindfulness meditation in educator growth and professional development. Second, based on an exploration of these experiences and the research literature, I recommend elements for use in an effective mindfulness meditation practice for educators.

As I began to consider how to investigate the impact of mindfulness meditation on my personal life and professional development as an educator, I started by choosing a theoretical structure or framework for how to conduct my investigation. I selected two overarching ideas as the frameworks for this process: Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of basic needs, and Mezirow's (1990) transformational learning theory. This literature review will begin by looking at mindfulness meditation as well as mindfulness meditation in the educational sector. From there, the Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of basic needs and the link to educator professional development will be discussed. This literature review will conclude with some information on reflective practice and Mezirow's (1990) transformational learning theory.

Mindfulness Meditation

Mindfulness meditation is defined as "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4). This

attention nurtures greater awareness, clarity, and acceptance of the present reality. Kabat-Zinn (1990), the creator of mindfulness meditation and the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Program (MBSR), had early experiences with meditation and strongly believed that this practice was helpful to those suffering from chronic pain, anxiety, stress, and other challenging health conditions.

Before going more deeply into mindfulness meditation, it is important to differentiate between this practice and other forms of meditation, namely concentrative practices. Concentrative practices involve resting the mind on a single object of awareness with the overall goal of single pointedness (Brown et al., 2013). A single object of awareness could be the physical breath or a lit candle. When attention strays from that object the discipline of the meditation practice is to consistently redirect the mind back. This is different from mindfulness meditation, which focuses on moment to moment attention to whatever arises, without judgement or attachment to any particular thought (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). While it is known that all forms of meditation assist in managing the impacts of stress (Salzberg, 2014), mindfulness meditation can be used as a tool to support educator development and self-reflection, as it trains one to remain in the present moment and notice habits, emotions, and assumptions, but not necessarily act on them (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Santorelli, 1999).

Educators can be seen as role models to students and it is believed that noticing habits, emotions, and assumptions but not necessarily acting on them are important characteristics to cultivate in the classroom. The ability to detach from potentially limiting thoughts and thought patterns when teaching encourages the idea of partnership and sharing knowledge, rather than being perceived as an expert and having all the

answers. Mezirow (1997) offers that the goal of educators is to encourage students to make their own interpretations rather than act on the beliefs and judgements of others. I believe that all forms of meditation are beneficial, but mindfulness meditation was chosen for this project due to this cultivation of freedom from thoughts.

Kabat-Zinn (1990) defines the principles of mindfulness meditation in his MBSR program as follows:

- Non-judging: Being an impartial witness to your own experience
- Patience: Things unfold in their own time
- Beginner's Mind: Willing to see everything as if it were the very first time
- Trust: Developing trust in yourself and your feelings
- Non-striving: Meditation is non-doing; there is no goal other than to be yourself
- Acceptance: Seeing things as they actually are, in the present moment
- Letting go: In paying attention to our thoughts, we realize there are certain thoughts and feelings we want to hold on to, no more how unhealthy they may be.

The structure of the program is 8 weeks in length, and each class is 2.5 hours long (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Every week some education and theory around mindfulness meditation is provided, as well as an opportunity to practice it while in the presence of the instructor. The experiential portion of it includes both mindfulness meditation as well as gentle yoga. The students are provided with instruction and guided CDs for home practice. After each week, the students are invited to share their experiences in a group setting, or privately with the instructor. Kabat-Zinn (1990) designed the MBSR program to be an intensive training experience in mindfulness and its integration into daily life (Carmody & Baer, 2009).

People drawn to mindfulness meditation are usually suffering from illness, cancer, other chronic diseases, anxiety and depression, and those feeling the impact of work-related stress (Baer et al., 2012). They are drawn to this practice as a way to cope with their current circumstances (Baer et al., 2012). Kabat-Zinn (1990) believes that people must learn to work with the very stress and pain that is causing the suffering—*befriend* what is not wanted and it is given less power in your life.

Mindfulness meditation has also been prescribed by doctors, psychologists, and other mental health professionals. Some of these reasons are listed as: anxiety disorder, depression relapse, borderline personality disorder, eating disorders, drug and alcohol addiction, and generalized stress-related symptoms (Brown et al., 2013). It has been found that the MBSR program followed by continued, formal practice strengthens the capacity to cultivate mindfulness throughout the day (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Keune & Forintos, 2010). This is an important point because it demonstrates the transfer of a skill learned from a structured program into daily life. The ingrained patterns that are prevalent with disorders need to be interrupted in order to heal (Brown et al., 2013). Mindfulness meditation offers a gentle interruption and a reminder of living with awareness and not on auto-pilot. The demonstrated behavioural change is a higher quality of living for them and those around them due to the ability to better manage stress and the impact of their illness (Brown et al., 2013).

The benefits that people have seen from this practice are numerous. The list includes a more positive state of mind, positive behavioural changes, beneficial influences to the brain, the autonomic nervous system, stress hormones, the immune

system, and health behaviours including eating, sleeping, and substance abuse (Baer et al., 2012; Brown et al., 2013; Davis & Hayes, 2011; Heydenfeldt et al., 2011).

The mindfulness meditation principles listed earlier are an important differentiation in meditation practices, and part of the reason why mindfulness meditation is applied in therapeutic settings. I believe that all forms of meditation practices are good for mental health; however, mindfulness meditation encourages a sense of freedom from thoughts (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Salzberg, 2014; Santorelli, 1999). This is because of the focus on non-attachment and lack of judgement to what comes up (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). There is a strong emphasis on noticing thoughts that come up, but not allowing oneself to be defined by the thoughts that come up (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, 2012; Santorelli, 1999). This focus has provided those with anxiety or depression a feeling of relief—to realize that they are not defined by their thoughts. A thought is simply a thought. The next thought that comes up can be different, and one has the power to make it different if we are consciously aware of what comes up and not on autopilot (Kabat-Zinn, 1990).

Mindfulness Meditation in Education

There are numerous mindfulness meditation programs that focus specifically on teachers as well as students in the classroom (Meiklejohn et al., 2012; Poulin, Mackenzie, Soloway, & Karayolas, 2008). Mindfulness meditation curriculums created for the educational sector can be integrated in three different methods. As explained by Meiklejohn et al. (2012), the first method is indirect whereby the teacher develops a mindfulness meditation practice. The second method is direct and teaches the students mindfulness meditation. The third method created is a combination of both indirect as well as direct.

Mindfulness meditation programs in the educational sector have been primarily focused on managing stress both in and out of the classroom, as well as teacher burnout (Delgado et al., 2010; Meiklejohn et al., 2012; Poulin et al., 2008). Meiklejohn et al. (2012) offer that "educators face an array of stressors, yet are provided with few resources with which to alleviate them" (p. 292). Based on Kabat-Zinn's (1990) MBSR principles, the programs for educators teach mindfulness meditation as well as weave in other aspects such as wellness or the cultivation of resilience (Meiklejohn et al., 2012; Miller, 2014). The programs offered are too numerous to list in this literature review, but I will discuss one in detail: Mindfulness Based Wellness Education (MBWE).

MBWE was created at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (Miller, 2014). As outlined by Soloway, Poulin, and Mackenzie (2010), this course teaches mindfulness meditation to teacher candidates, and focuses on the following objectives:

1. Enhance their ability to respond (versus react) to stressful situations both within and outside the classroom in order to reduce their levels of stress and improve their health.
2. Explore their understanding and experience of various aspects of wellness.
3. Learn teaching strategies for bringing mindfulness and wellness into their classrooms.

Student teachers were interviewed to assess the effects of their practice. It was found that the students felt more relaxed in their teaching practicums (Soloway et al., 2010). One student shared "my attitude and mindset can be picked up by the students and when I present myself as a balanced and mindful teacher, the students will respond in a

calmer manner" (Soloway et al., 2010, p. 224). Overall, it was found that those enrolled in the course exhibited greater increases in life satisfaction and teaching self-efficacy (Miller, 2014).

There is increasingly convincing data that mindfulness meditation supports physical and overall emotional health (Baer et al., 2012; Brown et al., 2013; Davis & Hayes, 2011; Heydenfeldt et al., 2011). From an educational perspective, sustained mindfulness meditation has been found to enhance attention and emotional self-regulation (Delgado et al., 2010; Meiklejohn et al., 2012). As one can imagine, these changes could hold significant benefits for educators.

An additional benefit to educators is that mindfulness meditation reduces cognitive rigidity (Greenberg, Reiner, & Meiran, 2012). Cognitive rigidity is defined by Greenberg et al. (2012) as "a resistance to change in beliefs, attitudes or personal habits, or the tendency to develop and perseverate in the use of mental or behavioral sets" (p. 1). Since the practice directs students to focus on the present moment with a beginner's mind, there is less opportunity for students to rely on previous experience (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Santorelli, 1999). After a mindfulness meditation program, it was found that the cognitive rigidity scores were lowered (Greenberg et al., 2012). From a behavioural standpoint, it opens up the opportunity for educators to experience change in a more positive way rather than limiting themselves through thoughts and emotions created by being on auto-pilot.

Carmody, Baer, Lykins, and Olendzki (2009) build upon this notion and offer that mindfulness meditation can increase one's effectiveness to *reperceive*. Reperceiving is described by Carmody et al. (2009) as "a change in relation to perceived experience (p.

47). It was empirically proven in this study that participation in a mindfulness meditation program improves the ability to change how experiences are viewed. I believe that this offers benefits for educators in being able to better manage their level of stress.

Finally, Yeganeh and Kolb (2009) researched the impact of mindfulness meditation in increasing the effectiveness of learning from experience. The researchers argue that mindfulness meditation can free the mind to intentionally think and create in new ways (Yeganeh & Kolb, 2009). If this mindset can be cultivated in a classroom, this offers significant benefits for educators. The invitation is that teachers and students can remain creative and open to ideas, rather than feel limited by past experiences.

Critical Viewpoint of Mindfulness Meditation

Despite all these benefits mindfulness meditation is not necessarily the solution that is appropriate for everyone. It has been shown that in some cases, one's level of stress can increase because asking one to sit quietly, encouraging the mind to slow down and watching thoughts is not what they are looking for in their stress management practice (Kabat-Zinn, 1990).

It can also be hard to pinpoint exactly what the practice is as it is focused on awareness; it is all consuming and organically driven. For example, Kabat-Zinn (2012) states "the paradox of this invitation is that everything you might wish for is already here" (p. 81). People who are driven and achievement oriented may ironically find this very stressful and become frustrated due to the lack of "doing." Some people prefer the opportunity to live mindfully, or do an activity that requires all their attention like painting or long-distance running (Carson & Langer, 2006). Mindfulness meditation can

be frustrating for people as it is a stationary practice, and with little to no expectations on the participants other than to sit and observe.

Another critique of this practice is that mindfulness meditation can be solitary and potentially isolating for some people. When one sits and meditates, it is an individual journey with no connection to others during the activity. People who are extroverted by nature may find an internal, introspective journey challenging and may not enjoy it (Cain, 2012).

Some people also believe that there is a religious component to mindfulness meditation. This may be due to the original Buddhist roots of this practice (Kabat-Zinn, 1994); however, there are no religious beliefs or practices associated with mindfulness meditation. Kabat-Zinn (2012) refers to mindfulness as a "love affair—with life, with reality and imagination, with the beauty of your own being, with your heart and body and mind, and with the world" (p. 2). It is a moment to moment curiosity about what is happening to you, and there are no imposed religious beliefs associated with it.

This study examines the use of mindfulness meditation in educator growth and professional development. I posit that mindfulness meditation may allow educators to make more conscious decisions about their teaching and offer an opportunity to critically reflect on their habits, patterns, and assumptions associated with their practice. Consequently, Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs and Maslow's (1990) transformative learning theory was applied to offer a key framework in order to research this. The next section will look at Maslow's theory in more detail and discuss the applicability to educator development.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

The framework chosen for this research project is Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of

basic needs and Mezirow's (1990) transformative learning theory. These conceptual structures will form the analytical framework for this research project and will be woven through the results. I believe that as educators progress through their career, they move through Maslow's hierarchy to reach self-actualization and perhaps self-transcendence. Moreover, I chose to add Mezirow's (1990) transformative learning theory as a way to help identify which experiences in an educator's career path or journey through Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of basic needs were noteworthy and prompted critical reflection. Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of basic needs will be discussed first, followed by Mezirow's (1990) transformative learning theory.

Maslow (1968) offered a theory of human motivation suggesting a hierarchy of five basic needs ranging from the essential human need for food and water through to self-actualization which stresses being the best person you can be. Maslow argued that all humans progress through the stages of steps of the hierarchy to reach the higher levels. In the latter part of his career Maslow began discussing a sixth need which he called self-transcendence, and was characterized as the highest level of human attainment (Koltko-Rivera, 2006). Although this may not be the most obvious conceptual framework to choose, I elected to apply Maslow's theory based on his belief that situations and experiences propel people to move up the hierarchy or down. I am curious to apply this framework, research my experiences with mindfulness meditation, and analyze how it impacted my personal and professional development.

The first need and most basic need that Maslow discussed is called the physiological stage. Maslow (1987) argued that in this stage humans are dominated by their physiological needs for food, water, procreation, and other physical needs with

emotional or other needs pushed into the background. It is believed that this stage acts as the most potent. When a human is missing everything in life—love, self-esteem, physical security, and food—lack of food will act as the dominant motivator. When physiological needs are met, higher needs then emerge.

Safety needs are the next stage in the pyramid. To describe safety needs, Maslow (1987) looked at the reactions and needs of children as he believed that adults are able to hide their emotions and feelings to a greater extent. He believed that children's safety needs can be met with a predictable, orderly world, and with a routine that can be trusted. As one grows into adulthood, there is more life experience and perhaps less dependency on these routines and structure; however, it is believed that we have a common preference for the comforts of security, stability, dependency, and freedom from fear (Datta, 2010).

Once safety needs are met, there is an opportunity to meet the needs of belongingness and love. Maslow (1987) believed that individuals will be keenly aware if they do not have meaningful relationships with friends, a partner, or children. There is a sense of wanting to fit in to the social group they think they are a part of and that they truly belong in it. It is important to note that the needs of love include both giving and receiving, and that love is not synonymous with sex.

Esteem falls next in the hierarchy and represents the needs or desire for a stable, firmly based sense of self-esteem (Maslow, 1987). This self-esteem can be classified into two areas. The first area is the desire for achievement and confidence in the face of the world; and the second area, for the desire for a positive reputation, prestige, or respect from others. When this need is met, one can look at the world with feelings of self-

confidence, worth, strength, capability, and adequacy of being useful and necessary in the world.

Even if all these needs are met, the individual still may feel restless without self-actualization. This need represents the thought that humans want to do what they are meant to do. Maslow (1987) describes this as humans being true to their own nature and believes that musicians must make music, artists must paint, and poets must write.

In the latter part of Maslow's career, he began to consider that there was a level past self-actualization. He believed there was a state that preceded this, and he called it self-transcendence. At this level, the individual's needs are put aside out of service for others or a cause that is outside of themselves—there is a more global view of the world (Venter & Venter, 2010). Some individuals are capable of going beyond self-actualization as their motivation, and transcend to a level where they no longer worry about other people's opinions (Venter & Venter, 2010). Despite some opposition from some scholars, it is believed that the inclusion of this level in the hierarchy "allows for a richer conceptualization of the meaning of life worldview dimension" (Koltko-Rivera, 2006, p. 310). Individuals are freed from the influence of their environment and the opinions of others (Venter & Venter, 2010).

The main challenge to Maslow's theory that has been explored in the literature is the lack of empirical testing on this model (Kohn, 2004; Soper et al., 1995; Wahba & Bridwell, 1976). In addition to this, Neher (1991) believes that there are some modifications that should be made to Maslow's theory. One modification in particular is the fact that humans inherit needs, and these needs are subject to cultural input. Neher states "our higher needs undoubtedly require encouragement from the environment for

their development" (p. 109). I interpret this critique as Maslow not fully recognizing the strength of one's culture in the ability to meet higher needs. It is thought that culture plays a role in the disruption of higher needs fulfillment, and this is not currently recognized (Neher, 1991).

The other limitation that was cited was the acknowledgement of an ascent as well as a descent in this model (Rowan, 1999). Maslow's theory is often depicted in a triangle, with the assumption that one develops in an upward pattern. Maslow (1970) explains the ascent into higher levels always includes lower needs (Rowan, 1999). Rowan (1999) suggests that when one returns to lower levels, it is not entered in the same way it was before. There are slight modifications to our needs based on our development, growth, and previous experiences.

Despite the above critiques as well as the lack of evidence to support this model, it is still highly cited, utilized, and accepted as a theory of human motivation (Kohn, 2004; Neher, 1991; Soper et al., 1995; Wahba & Bridwell, 1976). I chose to use it as a lens in this research project as I believe it is an accepted model of human development in the academic literature, and offers a good analytical structure for this self-study.

Maslow and the Link to Educator Development

What is the link to Maslow and educator personal and professional development? My limited understanding before delving more deeply into this theory was that people moved through the hierarchy mainly due to personal circumstances and personal experiences. However, Maslow (1943) discusses that a person's need for fulfillment can take many forms:

The specific form that these needs will take will of course vary greatly from

> person to person. In one individual it may take the form of the desire to be an ideal mother, in another it may be expressed athletically, and in still another it may be expressed in painting pictures or in inventions. (p. 382)

This leads me to more fully appreciate that individuals can seek fulfillment through their educational career, and this can assist in their development from one stage to the next. The experiences and situations that educators face in their careers can also assist in moving through the hierarchy.

To further illustrate the latter point, Simmons (2011) offers that educator development is similar to Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs. Specifically, as people gain more experience in their teaching career, they move up the hierarchy of needs. Simmons states "a pattern of shifting foci describes a movement away from concerns on the instrumentals of teaching, towards concerns about the students' learning, and finally, to concerns about reflective practice" (p. 236). Self-actualization occurs when one is engaged in a process of continual improvement (Simmons, 2011).

In taking a closer look at the professional development of teachers, I offer Huberman's (1989) Model of Teacher Development. Although this is not a conceptual framework offered as a focal point of this research, it is noteworthy as it was developed for educators and is also a stage-based theory. Huberman (1989) provides a framework with stages identified for teachers to be aware of and prepare for.

The beginning stages are about career entry, survival, and discovery. Huberman (1989) posits that teachers stabilize in their careers after 4 to 6 years, and have a choice after approximately 7 years. This is similar to the teaching development hierarchy that

Simmons (2011) offers. Educators begin to build their teaching identity and develop through Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs within 5 years of teaching (Simmons, 2011).

Huberman (1989) describes the stage of 7 to 18 years of teaching as offering an opportunity for experimentation and diversification, or stock-taking/interrogations. This is a pivotal stage in teacher development; whereby teachers face "uncertainties about the future" (Floden & Huberman, 1989, p. 462). If teachers take the experimentation/ diversification route, they begin to more creatively experiment with their facilitation strategies or perhaps seek leadership roles. The alternate stage of stock-taking/ interrogations is to consider leaving the teaching profession to do something new if their educator role is no longer fulfilling, or to make a more unfortunate choice which is cultivating a negative attitude towards professional development and change (Floden & Huberman, 1989).

Although not a focal point of this research project, this is a useful conceptual framework as this model directly addresses the potential of failure or burnout whereas Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs focuses solely on development from one stage to another—either up the hierarchy or down. Huberman (1989) believed that by accepting the difficulties prevalent in one's profession, by being aware of the danger zones in the career cycle, and how particular vulnerabilities manifest themselves, we have a far greater chance of reducing their impact or avoiding them altogether.

It is interesting to note that Guskey (2002) believed that the primary motivator for educators lies in the quality of their work, and stage-related professional development is not relevant. According to Guskey, educator changes in beliefs and attitudes towards work is more in accordance with their ability to enhance learning outcomes in their

students. Guskey further states that "evidence of improvement or positive change in the learning outcomes of students generally precedes, and may be a pre-requisite to, significant change in the attitudes and beliefs of most teachers" (p. 4). He believes that this is the primary motivator for educators rather than a stage-based model of development. This is an interesting point to consider; however, I argue that the reason behind cultivating a negative attitude towards work as an educator is more complex than simply being unable to influence learning outcomes in their students. One educator shared in an academic article on teacher attrition that although she had flexibility and ownership over her lesson plans, in the school her "opinion was not valued" (Schaefer, 2013, p. 268). This type of experience would likely increase stress and potentially cultivate a shift in attitude towards work.

> Long work hours, lack of control over responsibilities, organizational constraints, interpersonal and task conflicts, role ambiguity, and fear of getting fired along with chronic nervousness over the prospect of not getting hired elsewhere are among the most common stressors that make people unhappy (Salzberg, 2014, p. 8).

Educators encounter unavoidable stressors in their work that impact their effectiveness in the classroom (Meiklejohn et al., 2012; Posen, 2013). Stress is an unavoidable aspect in life (Posen, 2013; Seyle, 1976). As discussed in chapter one, the primary challenge with stress is how a person chooses to cope with it (Seyle, 1976). Selye (1976) created a theory that he coined the *General Adaptation Syndrome*. It was his belief that stress played a role in all disease, and the failure to cope with it can produce diseases of adaption.

Posen (2013) points out that "some stress is actually good for us, but more is not always better" (p. 23). Posen discusses Nixon's Human Function Curve, and believes that three things happen when the level of stress becomes too high. First there is fatigue; second, there is a decrease in performance; and third, a loss of awareness and judgement. At a certain point, if one cannot manage the stress associated with work, it will increase the level of anxiety the individual feels and further result in lower job performance and efficiency (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Posen, 2013).

It is important to embrace change and participate in professional development programs that spark interest and challenge in a healthy and productive way. This will help keep educators engaged, interested in their work, and following a path towards self-actualization. However, this is not as easy as it sounds. In our current society the speed of change is very fast and there are exceptionally high demands placed upon educators to accept and embrace new aspects of their work they had no control over (Bridges, 1991; Posen, 2013). There is an expectation to wholeheartedly embrace new changes that educators may not agree with, thus increasing anxiety and stress (Posen, 2013).

Many people feel a lack of control when change is imposed on them (Bridges, 1991; Hiatt & Creasey, 2012; Posen, 2013). Mindfulness meditation cultivates a connection that allows us to "return over and over to something deep within ourselves that is steady, that is reliable, that is whole—and that is not a thing" (Kabat-Zinn, 2012, p. 100). This modality offers support in managing the effects of stress and anxiety (Baer et al., 2012; Brown et al., 2013; Davis & Hayes, 2011; Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Salzberg, 2014; Santorelli, 1999) and cultivates self-understanding, acceptance, and freedom from thoughts (Miller, 2014).

Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs is being used as a key framework to illustrate educator personal and professional development as a result of mindfulness meditation. As discussed above, educators face a myriad of stressors in the workplace, and mindfulness meditation is being offered as a potentially valuable adjunct to their personal and professional development. The structure of this theory is being used as a way to assist in the analysis of situations and experiences, and consider how mindfulness meditation supported development through the hierarchy. The other key framework being used in this research project is Mezirow's (1990) transformational learning theory. By way of introducing this important conceptual framework, the topic of critical reflection and reflective practice will be discussed first.

Critical Reflection

In teacher education increased emphasis has been placed on the role of reflective practice (Freese, 2006; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Hubball et al., 2005; Jones & Jones, 2013). Reflective practice is generally valued as an important underpinning for an educator's growth and development (Freese, 2006; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Hubball et al., 2005; Jones & Jones, 2013). Mindfulness meditation can be used as a tool to support educator development and self-reflection, as it trains one to remain in the present moment and notice habits, emotions, and assumptions, but not necessarily act on them (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Santorelli, 1999). This section will begin with some information on the history of reflection and reflective practice, self-reflection, and Mezirow's (1990) transformational learning theory.

Reflective Practice

Over 80 years ago, John Dewey (1933) conceptualized reflection as the "active,

persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (p. 9). Dewey believed that for reflection to be an informative and valuable experience, it must meet four criteria:

1. It must enable the learner to make connections between ideas, abstract relationships, and other experiences and ideas
2. It must be systematic and intentional
3. It must be a social activity, completed through interaction with others
4. It must be viewed as a means of personal growth and continued improvement.

Dewey (1933) believed that reflective thought was not an opportunity to casually think through things, but a systematic, disciplined, and rigorous way of thinking. His process of reflective thought can be compared to a process of scientific inquiry in that it has precise steps, and an intended outcome. He defined the steps as the observation and analysis of an experience, the generation of a hypothesis and theories, gathering data, and drawing conclusions (Jones & Jones, 2013). Dewey believed that the process of reflective thinking needed to be applied with intention.

Schön (1983) built upon Dewey's work and created a model to make reflection a part of professional growth and development. He believed that not all actions lead to learning, but those who are informed by reflection may experience intentional growth (Hatton & Smith, 1995). His model includes *reflection-in-action* which is defined as the process of thinking on your feet or reflecting in the moment; whereas, *reflection-on-action* takes place after the event has occurred and the practitioner considers what could have been done differently (Jaeger, 2013). Schön believed that a reflective practitioner is one who

plans before taking action as well as after events in order to consider alternative choices.

Reflection also weaves in the notion of anticipation, or anticipatory reflection, which is conceptualized as:

> When an event is likely to occur, or is planned to occur, reflective pathways from past encounters of a similar nature may be used to produce a framework from which future events may be anticipated and preparations made (Kelly, 1955). Thus reflective thought also represents a dynamic that can bridge past, present, and future activities. (Kompf & Bond, 2001, p. 58)

People who are engaged in helping professions such as teaching, nursing, and social work are encouraged to engage in a reflective practice (Asselin, 2011; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Norton et al., 2011). It is believed that reflection is a way to explore the depth and complexity of practice, to generate new knowledge, and to increase the ability to solve problems in the moment (Asselin, 2011). Some common examples of reflective practice are journaling, engaging in narrative writing, participating in peer group discussions, independent research, and engaging in dialogue with a mentor, amongst other methods (Asselin, 2011; Norton et al., 2011). Reflection provides the opportunity to enhance identity development and further challenge professional development (Norton et al, 2011). It is believed that if the practitioner engages in reflection and focuses on continuous improvement, those patients or students they support will benefit from this practice (Kumar, 2011).

Despite the benefits of reflective practice, there are some challenges that are associated with it. The level of experience that a teacher has plays a factor. Many inexperienced teachers lack the skills needed to engage in reflection (Jaeger, 2013). At

the beginning of their career, their primary focus is on the practical aspects of teaching (Jaeger, 2013; Ottesen, 2007; Rogers, 2001; Simmons, 2011). Are the individuals ready and able to engage in a practice that requires them to draw on experience they may not have yet? Schön (1983) believed that the ability to reflect-in-action is the mark of a true professional. If one agrees with this, then perhaps novice teachers are engaging in higher levels of reflection-on-action as they gain experience, as well as through collaborative reflection with mentor teachers (Ottesen, 2007).

In addition to this, there is a reconceptualization of teaching that needs to occur in order for educators to fully embrace this practice (Hatton & Smith, 1995). For educators to receive full support for reflection from school administration, they need time and opportunity for development so that the essential metacognitive skills can be developed (Hatton & Smith, 1995; Jaeger, 2013). The vast majority of techniques are typically aimed at cultivating reflection-on-action skills instead of encouraging teachers to adjust their instruction in the moment (Jaeger, 2013).

Educators also need a safe and supportive environment to engage in reflective practice. Reflection, particularly an effective reflective practice with peers, encourages a certain amount of vulnerability (Hatton & Smith, 1995). It is believed that "reflective thought requires open-mindedness, wholeheartedness and responsibility on the part of the learner" (Rogers, 2001, p. 42). It is important to ensure that barriers impeding the process of reflection are examined and dismantled in order to allow the process of exploration to occur.

Self-Reflection

Rogers (2001) believes that there are two common antecedents of the reflective process. The first antecedent is that an event or situation beyond the educator's typical

experience must occur if the reflective experience is to be triggered. Second, the individual must be ready and willing to engage in the reflective process. In addition to this, Mezirow (1991) argues that conscious awareness and deliberate choice are prerequisites to reflection. Thus, it can be concluded that the work of educators is to be aware and open to opportunities for self-reflection (Rogers, 2001), and not being subject to the limitations of auto-pilot (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Santorelli, 1999).

Although not a focal point of this research project, Brookfield (1995) highlights some interesting points to consider. He posits that there are four different lenses that can be engaged by educators in a process of critical reflection. As identified by Brookfield, these lenses are:

1. The autobiographical lens, or self-reflection
2. The students' eyes
3. Our colleagues' experiences
4. Theoretical literature

Brookfield argues that the autobiographical lens, or self-reflection, is the foundation of reflection. A reflective exploration can sometimes lead a teacher to question themselves, their values and their beliefs (Freese, 2006; Palmer, 1998; Zajonc, 2006). Brookfield states that teachers must focus on their previous experiences to "become aware of the paradigmatic assumptions and instinctive reasonings that frame how we work" (p. 30). What assumptions frame my teaching style? Who am I in the classroom? Sometimes these assumptions are so deeply ingrained in our personality that they are hard to identify without careful, thoughtful analysis. Similarly, Palmer (1998) notes that

> Teaching holds a mirror to the soul. If I am willing to look in that mirror and not run from what I see, I have a chance to gain self-knowledge—and knowing myself is as crucial to good teaching as knowing my students and my subject. (p. 3)

Carving out the space to understand "who is the self that teaches" (Palmer, 1998, p. 7) is critical for success. Palmer (1998) continues this thought by offering "good teachers share one trait: a strong sense of personal identity infuses their work" (p. 11). Transformative learning helps educators become conscious of and aware of their habits of mind (Cranton & King, 2003). Mezirow (1997) believes that the goal of educators is to make their own interpretations rather than act on the beliefs and judgements of others, and transformative learning can assist in this process. In addition to this, if mindfulness meditation can help in this process, it is certainly a useful professional development activity for educators to consider.

Mezirow's (1990) Transformative Learning Theory

Mezirow (1990) posited that we make meaning of the world through our experiences. Simply put, if something happens once, we anticipate it happening again.

> Through the process, we develop habits of mind or a frame of reference for understanding the world, much of which if uncritically assimilated. In the process of daily living, we absorb values, assumptions, and beliefs about how things are without much thought. (Cranton & King, 2003, p. 32)

Mezirow (1997) defines transformative learning as the process by which we influence change within a *frame of reference*. Frames of reference are a body of experience—concepts, values, feelings, and conditioned responses that define an adult's world (Cranton & King, 2003; Mezirow, 1997). The process of transformational learning

occurs when individuals question their frame of reference, or their way of seeing the world (Mezirow, 1990). It is a process of critical self-reflection whereby individuals realize that their views no longer fit—it does not explain the new experience that has just occurred.

Mezirow (1991, 1997) further delineates this dissonance or transformational concept with two dimensions: *habits of mind* and *points of view*. It is his belief that habits of mind are habitual ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that are influenced by assumptions. These assumptions operate like a set of codes that have been pieced together throughout one's life (Mezirow, 1997). Habits of mind encourage a specific point of view and feelings that shapes a particular interpretation (Mezirow, 1997).

Points of view are more flexible than habits of mind and are subject to change as we reflect on new knowledge or something that has happened (Mezirow, 1991, 1997). This happens when one tries to understand actions that did not work as anticipated. It is possible to try out a point of view, but for it to become ingrained in who the educator is it must ultimately impact their habits of mind.

Our frames of reference are ultimately quite strong, and influence the way we interact with the world (Cranton & King, 2003; Mezirow, 1994, 1997). The process of learning to make meaning is focused and shaped by these frames of reference. Mezirow (1994) offers two meaning structures to further define this concept: meaning perspectives and meaning scheme. Meaning perspectives is defined as "broad sets of predispositions resulting from psychocultural assumptions which determine the horizons of our expectations" (Mezirow, 1994, p. 223). These are socially and culturally based (Mezirow, 1994). A meaning scheme is the "constellation of concept, belief, judgement and feeling

which shape an interpretation" (Mezirow, 1994, p. 223). Meaning schemes are manifestations of our meaning perspectives. Mezirow (1991) defines four ways to learn:

1. Refining or elaborating our meaning schemes
2. Learning new meaning schemes
3. Transforming meaning schemes
4. Transforming meaning perspectives

It is thought that the only way to transform meaning perspectives is through reflection on the premise of the problem (Mezirow, 1991). Most reflection takes place within a context of problem whereby one generally reflects on the content and the process of the problem. Sometimes one needs to go deeper, which is critically reflecting on the premise (Mezirow, 1991, 1997). The premise is considered to be the overall problem, or the big picture. Mezirow (1991, 1997) argues that the most significant learning that one can do is critically reflecting on one's own premises. Mezirow (1991) outlines the following phases of critically self-reflecting on one's own premises:

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame, sometimes turning to religion for support
3. A critical assessment of assumptions
4. Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and others have negotiated a similar change
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
6. Planning a course of action
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans

8. Provisionally trying out new roles
9. Renegotiating relationships and negotiating new relationships
10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective.

Cranton and King (2003) support the notion of self-reflection on one's premises, and also believe that transformative learning is an essential element in the process of *individuation*. Individuation is defined as having a sense of self that differentiates us from others (Cranton & King, 2003). Without individuation, there is no foundation on which to question assumptions as one cannot see themselves separated from others (Cranton & King, 2003). This leads to authenticity which is defined as the expression of the genuine self in the community (Cranton & King, 2003). These concepts support educator identity development—educators making choices based on who they are.

In order to transform our frame of reference we need to engage in critical reflection and discourse. Discourse is defined by Mezirow (1997) as a "dialogue devoted to assessing reasons presented in support of competing interpretations, by critically examining evidence, arguments and alternative points of view" (p. 6). Mezirow (1991) believes that people search for those who are the most informed, objective, and rational to seek understanding in what has been encountered. Ideally, Mezirow (1991) argues that a participant in discourse will:

1. Have accurate and complete information
2. Be free of coercion and distorting self-deception
3. Be able to weigh evidence and assess arguments objectively
4. Be open to alternative points of view and to care about the way others think and feel

5. Be able to become critically reflective of assumptions and their consequences
6. Have equal opportunity to participate in the various roles of discourse
7. Be willing to accept an informed, objective, and rational consensus as a legitimate test of validity until new perspectives, evidence, or arguments are encountered, and are subsequently established through discourse as yielding better judgements.

Discourse and critical reflection on our assumptions will invite the possibility of transformation. An adapted model of transformative learning is shown in Figure 2. There has been some criticism of transformational learning theory. A concern that Mezirow was highlighting transformation when it could actually be classified as normative psychological development was cited in chapter 1. In addition to this argument, Tennant (1993) credits Mezirow with highlighting the social dimension of adult learning and education but believes his theory lacks a social critique. It is believed that he overemphasizes personal transformation and does not focus on social action. Collard and Law (1989) support this point and argue that Mezirow does not acknowledge the difficulty of fostering conditions of ideal learning in social environments where inequalities are entrenched. Mezirow's (1990) theory is concerned with the social in the individual, particularly one's capacity to question their frames of reference. Clark and Wilson (1991) believe that Mezirow places too much emphasis on the solitary individual and their ability to correct the social inequities within community. Mezirow (1994) counters this critique and states that "reflective action involves overcoming situational, knowledge, and emotional constraints" (p. 226). He further offers that action in transformation theory means making a decision, with the behaviour change potentially coming later.

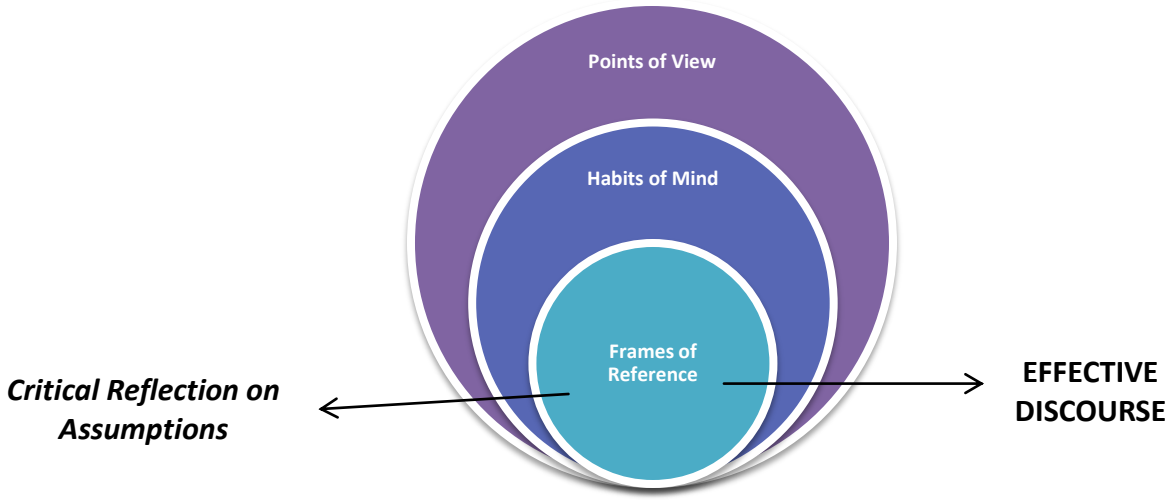


Figure 2. Mezirow's transformative learning theory

There has been some criticism of transformational learning theory. A concern that Mezirow was highlighting transformation when it could actually be classified as normative psychological development was cited in chapter 1. In addition to this argument, Tennant (1993) credits Mezirow with highlighting the social dimension of adult learning and education but believes his theory lacks a social critique. It is believed that he overemphasizes personal transformation and does not focus on social action.

Collard and Law (1989) support this point and argue that Mezirow does not acknowledge the difficulty of fostering conditions of ideal learning in social environments where inequalities are entrenched. Mezirow's (1990) theory is concerned with the social in the individual, particularly one's capacity to question their frames of reference. Clark and Wilson (1991) believe that Mezirow places too much emphasis on the solitary individual and their ability to correct the social inequities within community. Mezirow (1994) counters this critique and states that "reflective action involves overcoming situational, knowledge, and emotional constraints" (p. 226). He further offers that action in transformation theory means making a decision, with the behaviour change potentially coming later.

Despite the critiques offered, Mezirow's transformational learning theory remains a widely accepted conceptual framework in adult learning (Cranton & King, 2003). I also offer it in this research paper due to the focus on reflective practice and self-reflection, and believe that the concepts in this theory assisted in identifying experiences to include.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the literature on mindfulness meditation and mindfulness meditation in education. Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs and the relationship to

educator development was also discussed. This literature review concluded with a section on reflection, self-reflection, and Mezirow's (1990) transformational learning theory.

After conducting this literature review, I noticed that there is a vast amount of information available on some of the topics listed above. What seems to be lacking are personal accounts of how mindfulness meditation impacted personal and professional development. As Palmer (1998) discusses, to correct our obsession with objective knowledge, he offers alternatives that are more subjective in nature. This is his method of correcting imbalances in how education is approached. Using this line of thought, I offer my personal journey with mindfulness meditation as a way to balance the amount of objective knowledge available.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS

This study examines the use of mindfulness meditation in educator growth and professional development. Based on an exploration of my experiences with mindfulness meditation and a review of the literature, I recommend the elements required for an effective mindfulness meditation practice for educators. This chapter will outline the reasons behind the use of self-study through narrative inquiry for this project, address the methods used to collect and interpret the data, and discuss the limitations and ethical considerations within this project.

Research Methodology and Design

This study uses a qualitative research method, specifically self-study through narrative inquiry. Kelly (1955) believed that people hold on to memories that have meaning, and that a culmination of these memories not only becomes who one is today, but also frames how one anticipates and experiences future events. In considering this, I wanted a platform to share my experiences with mindfulness meditation openly and without constraints, and explore how this practice has shaped who I am personally and professionally. As qualitative research uses an open-ended approach and responses are interpreted based on one's own perspective (Creswell, 2012), this methodology was most appropriate.

In assessing the possible qualitative research methods, a method of self-study through narrative inquiry was selected. Self-study is an intentional and systematic inquiry into one's own practice (Hamilton, Smith, & Worthington, 2008). It is considered to be an exploration of the current state, what participants think of their own practice, and reflect on how they wish to change it (Hamilton et al., 2008). Further, self-study is a methodology often used by teachers who wish to improve their practice (Koster & van den

Berg, 2014). This method was chosen for this project as I felt that the experience I have with mindfulness meditation would support the exploration of the role of this practice in educator professional development. I also believe it assists in the development of recommendations for an effective mindfulness meditation practice for educators.

This self-study benefits from a narrative inquiry approach to tell the story. Creswell (2012) offers the point that a researcher uses narrative when there are individuals willing to tell their stories, and these stories offer practical insights. In addition to this, it has been discovered that teachers find it useful to hear the stories of others for personal and professional growth and development (Creswell, 2012; Floden & Huberman, 1989). I am sharing my story in hopes that others will connect and learn from it in some way.

In offering my own personal experiences, it is also autobiographical in nature, which, as Creswell (2012) describes, is a form of narrative research whereby the individual who is the subject of the study writes the accounts. I will be openly discussing my experiences with mindfulness meditation and interpreting the impact that it has had on my personal and professional development.

Research Participant

In the process of presenting this self-study through narrative inquiry, I will be retelling the experiences gained from my mindfulness meditation practice. I started my journey with hatha yoga and mindfulness meditation in 1998 and have been a dedicated student of this practice for over 16 years, and teacher for over 13 years. I have participated in many retreats over the years which have all included aspects of yoga and mindfulness meditation, as well an aspect of silence or introspective reflection.

In presenting this self-study, I analyze my experiences by drawing on connections found in the literature. The limitation to this approach is that I will be retelling my experiences and not involving external participants in any way. This includes the mindfulness meditation recommendations for educators which will also not be tested externally at this point. As I plan to use these recommendations with future students, I will consider these limitations as opportunities for further research.

Data Collection

The primary source of data is my journal notes and personal reflections from years of mindfulness meditation practice and retreats, as informed by literature on reflective practice, the importance of self-reflection, and the topic of mindfulness meditation. Also, I attended a mindfulness meditation retreat with Jon Kabat-Zinn and Saki Santorelli in June 2014. This also acted as a source of information and inspiration. I drew on this knowledge to piece together experiences that were pivotal for my personal development.

As there is a lot of data to draw on in my personal experiences with mindfulness meditation, I looked specifically for transformative learning experiences that served as a catalyst to question my frames of reference (Mezirow, 1991). I also conducted a review of the academic literature on the topics of mindfulness meditation, reflection, and self-reflection, in order to make connections between my experiences and the research articles. This led to an accumulation of research notes (Creswell, 2012) which I analyzed and interpreted.

Data Analysis

The research notes were critically analyzed through a lens of academic literature on mindfulness meditation, reflection, and self-reflection to determine the central

meaning behind each experience (Creswell, 2012). A framework for this analysis was needed in order to establish structure, direction, and trustworthiness of the information (LaBoskey, 2004). Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs provided this structure.

Through the analysis, the similarities between meaningful experiences in mindfulness meditation and the corresponding correlation to Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs became apparent. The personal narratives shared have been analyzed and presented in a manner that is organized according to each stage in the hierarchy. See Chapter 2 for a fuller description of these frameworks.

Accuracy of the Findings and Interpretations

One of the challenges in qualitative research is ensuring that the findings and interpretations of the analysis are accurate (Creswell, 2012). Creswell (2012) discusses three strategies that qualitative researchers typically employ to validate qualitative research: triangulation, member checking, and auditing. Triangulation is defined as "the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection in descriptions and themes in qualitative research" (Creswell, 2012, p. 259). The following section will discuss the strategies employed in ensuring validity in this research.

The first strategy was to ensure the accuracy and validity of the experiences and memories (Creswell, 2012). This was mitigated through providing a fine balance of enough detail on the situations, the experiences, and the memories, without losing focus. The descriptions provided to the reader detail my personal background; the experiences presented outline the environment, emotions, sensations felt, and subsequent outcomes. The goal is for the readers to be able to follow my path of personal and professional development, and potentially makes connections to their own experiences.

The second strategy was the link made between my experiences to the academic literature. Although I have had many experiences in my life that have challenged me to grow personally and professionally, the research notes were analyzed to include those that were informed and reinforced through the literature.

As this is a self-study through narrative inquiry it is important to recognize and acknowledge bias, and this represents the third strategy. As these are my stories and experiences, there is no doubt that my perception will be somewhat self-serving. Kelly (1955) discussed that our personal experiences are remembered because each holds great significance. The concern arises whether my accounts were accurate and not unconsciously adapted to suit the purposes of the study. To mitigate this risk I utilized handwritten journals from years past and consistently checked the notes to ensure validity and accuracy of the interpretation.

Scope and Limitations

The focus of this study will be primarily on the impact of mindfulness meditation to my personal and professional development. Based on this impact and the academic literature, I then recommend elements for an effective mindfulness meditation practice for educators. As discussed already, I am a dedicated mindfulness meditation practitioner with many years of practice. As a result I will be reviewing this topic through the lens of one who is already committed to mindfulness meditation.

This approach does come with limitations. One limitation to consider is that I will not be interviewing external participants or testing the recommendations in any way. I believe these are opportunities for future research on this topic.

A second limitation of this work lies in the fact that the stories told are through

my eyes and as such, will contain my bias. There is a danger in relying on a single story, and this is the reason I will balance this out through links discovered in the academic literature, as well as the strategies presented earlier on ensuring accuracy and validity in the research. I recognize, however, that my own perspectives may limit what I read; in this regard, I have been able to draw on the wisdom of my advisor and second reader in suggesting additional sources.

A third limitation to consider is that I am not a full-time certified classroom teacher. I am a human resources professional who manages learning and adult continuing education for a children's treatment centre. I am also a part-time yoga and meditation teacher with over 13 years of experience. I am comfortable to call myself an *Educator* as this is part of what I do for a living, and also the part of my work that I love. Despite these credentials, there may be some people who feel the recommendations are limited due to the fact I am not a classroom teacher. To mitigate this issue I have chosen to focus the study on the use of mindfulness meditation in educator growth and professional development, and not on teacher growth and professional development.

The last limitation to consider is the applicability of this study to other educators. My experiences with this practice are personal and unique to me, and it does not necessarily mean that others will reap the same benefits. It has been discovered, however, that teachers find it useful to hear the stories of others for personal and professional growth and development (Creswell, 2012; Floden & Huberman, 1989). I am sharing my story in hopes that others will connect and learn from it in some way.

Ethical Considerations

In the process of presenting this topic I will be sharing my memories and personal

accounts of my experience with this practice. I believe this is part of the rich data that one can uncover through narrative research. Efforts will be taken to ensure that the reader has a sense of the context, setting, feelings, problem, and subsequent resolution without mentioning exact locations or any other individuals by name. Stories shared that include accounts from mentors or friends will be described using a delicate balance of enough detail so the reader can be involved in the experience, but not enough detail that people can be identified.

Summary

This chapter focused on the reasons behind the use of self-study through narrative inquiry for this project. I aim to bring a personal account to this research project through an analysis of journal entries and personal reflections. As educators find it useful to hear the stories of others (Creswell, 2012; Floden & Huberman, 1989), I share my journey with mindfulness meditation through the lenses of Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Mezirow's transformative learning theory as a way of offering information to educators in a different way.

CHAPTER FOUR: MY JOURNEY

The purpose of this study is to examine the use of mindfulness meditation in educator growth and professional development. The term "educator" is being used in this context as anyone who educates others. For example, I am an adult educator who has years of experience with both mindfulness meditation and yoga. Mindfulness meditation is presented in this research project as a form of reflective practice and a support in educator personal and professional development (Webster-Wright, 2013; Zajonc, 2006). The focus of this chapter is to explore the role of mindfulness meditation on my personal and professional development. I will be analyzing this topic through the lenses of Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs and Mezirow's (1990) transformational learning theory. More specifically, Maslow's hierarchy of needs provides a way to assess and identify personal and professional development growth throughout the years. Mezirow's (1990) transformational learning theory enabled me to look deeper into these stages, and pinpoint which experiences made me engage in critical reflection, ultimately leading to a positive change. This chapter will present my journey with this practice, and be organized with a section devoted to each stage of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The examples cited have been transformative in my personal and professional development (Mezirow, 1997).

Background

I began a yoga and meditation practice at the age of 24. It is hard to describe what drew me to it, but at the time it felt like an inquiry question that I needed to explore. My earliest memories in life start from a place of being physically active and being amazed that my body could move the way it did. It never really mattered to me what the activity was; as long as I was moving it was invigorating and joyful. As I progressed through life,

the initial joy that I felt evolved into monotony and it was time to find a new path. This exploration led me to an activity that, to my surprise, changed my life.

From the initial love of physical activity I started out as a yoga practitioner. As I moved more deeply into the work, this organically adapted to include mindfulness meditation. I now practice a style of yoga that is deep, introspective, and mindful. In addition to this I also commit to a daily mindfulness meditation practice. Through this work I have connected with myself more deeply than I have through any other activity. The journey begins with some background information on my family to provide context to my life. From there, this section will start the discussion on the impact of mindfulness meditation to my personal and professional development, through the lens of Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs.

My parents are landed immigrants. They arrived in Canada in 1967 from their countries of birth to create a new life for themselves. My father is from Fuji, Japan, and my mother from Buxtehude, Germany. They have such an interesting journey—they met on a tour bus in Germany and fell in love. They began what my mother refers to as an adventure of a lifetime, and moved to Canada together.

After the mandatory 10-day waiting period they got married. My father immigrated to Canada a few months earlier and set up their home. Their wedding picture was taken by one of them on a regular street in Toronto, and in the background landscape you can see the neighbourhood postman. Their honeymoon was 1 day away in Niagara Falls. Through these straightforward facts one can deduce that my parents have values of simplicity and practicality.

I have two other siblings and we were all born in Canada. My sister is the eldest

and my brother is 2 years younger than her. I am the youngest child in my family and dubbed the baby much to my chagrin. My sister is the one we all count on and my brother is the heir of the family business. I wisely chose to stay away from the family business as I started working there at the young age of 8 years old, and quickly realized that my family relationships would be at risk if I worked there long term.

I share this background as a way to provide the foundational landscape of my story. I was raised by two people who had very different cultural backgrounds and acclimatized to life in Canada. They came to Toronto with very little money, worked incredibly hard, and are now virtually millionaires. The background of their cultures is similar in that they are hardworking, very practical, and loyal. I grew up with a template of study relentlessly, always show respect, and everything will be okay if you work hard enough.

The field of education is new to my family. We are a family littered with engineers, doctors, and dentists. These professions are known for their reliance on empirical data and evidence based best practices (Briggs Myers & Myers, 1995). As one can appreciate through the facts presented so far, I was raised in a very practical and straightforward way. When I discussed adult education as a chosen career focus for myself, my parents looked at me in a curious manner. Their expectations had been something that focused on science, engineering, or accounting. Teaching must be a vocation in order to be done justly and well (Talarico, 2001), and I felt that human resources—which was my initial focus—was too narrow in scope for me. I had another calling that was tapping me on the shoulder. In their traditional fashion, my parents encouraged me to study hard, and first understand the theory and intellect behind education and educational approaches. This was absolutely valid advice and I took it as

a way to get an introduction to this field.

Physiological Needs

In terms of Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs, my parents excelled at meeting physiological needs. This was most important to them. They believe that if there are three square meals on the table and clothes on our backs, they are meeting their primary responsibilities. Although I do not have memories of this, I believe that this must have been a struggle for them since they did not have a lot of money at times.

The physiological needs as defined by Maslow (1968) are the basic necessities of life. Food, water, shelter, and clothing are the most obvious characteristics that come to mind. In considering the applicability of mindfulness meditation to physiological needs, I reflected on the notion of whether there is a connection here. Do I consider mindfulness meditation a physiological need? By the definition that Maslow provides, it is not a physiological need. However, this practice has become such an important part of my life, I actually consider it a basic necessity despite not falling in the pure definition that Maslow provides. I can survive without it although my quality of life would dramatically decrease. Considering this, I will say that metaphorically speaking, mindfulness meditation is a physiological need for me.

Mindfulness meditation is so ingrained in who I am now that this way of thinking, living, being, is now part of me. Over the years of practice it has evolved to become a physiological need for me; it is as regular as eating, taking a shower, or brushing my teeth. There is something missing if I do not practice as I become anxious, tired, and do not sleep soundly. To illustrate this principle, Carmody and Baer (2008) conducted a study of patients during a mindfulness program and empirically discovered that the

practice of mindfulness meditation leads to increases in mindfulness, which in turn leads to symptom reduction and improved well-being. In an interesting application of this study, my well-being dramatically decreases if I do not practice.

The need to practice is of central importance to me. Simply stated, I am not the same person without it. I cannot function nor educate well. Overall, I become stressed, anxious, and tired, and in the classroom, I notice that I become very impatient and my teaching style changes from facilitator to the expert lecturer. I revert to downloading information in a transmission style rather than cultivating the desire to share information with one another.

Consistent, regular practice allows me to nurture the seeds of my life in a positive and healthy manner. Kabat-Zinn (2012) refers to consistent mindfulness meditation practice as adjusting our *default setting,* and believes that thinking is our typical practice rather than awareness. Our internal default setting is adjusted to greater mindfulness rather than mindlessness and being lost in thought (Kabat-Zinn, 2012). Thus, to keep my default setting in tune, mindfulness meditation practice is considered a physiological need in my life in order to function and educate to the best of my ability.

Safety Needs

As newcomers to Canada my parents realized their dreams but often spoke of the hard times they encountered as a result. They worked very hard to achieve all they have now but it was always surrounded by fear: the fear of being in a new country, fear of not being able to communicate well in English, the fear of not making the rent, and the fear of not being able to care for their children. Their fear drove them to be successful because there was no other option. What they experienced is referred to as *acculturative stress* and

is believed to be an inherent aspect of the immigrant experience (Thomas, 1995). Acculturation is defined by Thomas (1995) as "the attitudes or behaviours of persons from one culture are modified as a result of contact from a different culture (p. 132). The stress associated with migration can be enormous as one learns to adapt to a new culture. This can also be referred to as *culture shock*. This is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all the aspects of their culture that they were accustomed to (Oberg, 1960).

Maslow's safety needs are interpreted by Koltko-Rivera (2006) as seeking security through order and law. There is no doubt that my parents were able to provide security through routines, rules, and household procedures. What is not as clear to me is why I always felt an undercurrent of fear in my home. Was the amount of acculturative stress they felt a trigger for fear? Now that I have been out of the family home for over 20 years, and have had time and space to reflect, I have come to the conclusion that it was an issue of *trust in self*.

In the environment I grew up in, the paradox of trust in self and fear was created and modelled in an unhealthy fashion. Fear surrounded all the decisions that were made, and the scale usually tipped in that direction. The words "what if this happens" were often brought up rather than "we trust you have made the right decision." I was always encouraged to set goals that were grounded in reality and work tirelessly towards them, no matter the cost. For the most part this is a good skill to have and I am grateful for it, but the flip side of this lesson for me was fear: fear of the unknown, lack of trust in self and fear that it will never be good enough, or that I will never be good enough. The end result of this modelling was anxiety. Anxiety became a way of life and learning how to manage it has been a journey.

Anxiety and fear have found their way into everything. One of the biggest impacts has been in the classroom with trying new methods, a new curriculum, or new ideas. For example, anxiety and fear around whether a new course will work. I have wrestled with the notion of staying with the norm in order to avoid the anxiety and stress that arises with trying something new. If I am not able to manage the symptoms, the consequences can be severe: interrupted sleep, stomach pain, headaches, and finding myself in such a state the next day that the lesson suffers.

The irony of this has been that anxiety management has taught me more about myself than anything else. The paradox of trust in self and fear are part of who I am, and I have learned so much about myself through managing the associated anxiety. Palmer (1998) describes a paradox as "like the poles of a battery: hold them together, and they generate the energy of life; pull them apart, and the current stops flowing" (p. 67). Mindfulness meditation and yoga have been healing modalities for me. These practices have helped me to manage the power of this energy in a healthy and nurturing way. I have also learned to be curious about what is happening when the energy of the paradox moves too far in a negative direction. Mindfulness meditation has fulfilled a need in my life and has created a feeling of safety that I have not found anywhere else (Kabat-Zinn, 2012; Santorelli, 1999).

In my personal practice I have had quite a bit of experience learning to work with fear. I have encountered it through attempting a yoga pose I had not done before, to moving more deeply into the work and encountering a fear of losing myself, to feeling lost and isolated during silent retreats. It is interesting to note that a thread of commonality amongst these all experiences is silence. The situation was always different,

the emotions that arose, and the experience itself. Pure silence was always a factor when I encountered these emotions.

One experience in particular was while I was part of a silence that was so profound it was almost deafening. It was so quiet one could hear fellow participants breathing. In this retreat we were disconnected from all communication for a period of time—this included email communication, reading, eye contact, and speaking with one another. After approximately 24 hours of this I felt a darkness descending upon me. It was actually quite frightening as I could not place what this was. Was this in my mind, is it real, and is it my imagination?

These fearful questions began percolating and I realized that I was in my cognitive, thinking mind. I came back to my anchor—my grounded, safe, and loving space which is the breath—and befriended this dark shadow as best I could which was with a sense of curiosity, mingled with suspicion. *Befriending* is defined by Kabat-Zinn (2012) and Santorelli (1999) as allowing your emotions in; not turning away from them, changing them, or sweeping them under the carpet.

I soon realized this darkness represented grief. There were hidden, buried emotions underneath my façade of stability and happiness. I had suppressed this grief and had not yet processed it in my mind and body. Santorelli (1999) describes the human response to fear as a way of protecting ourselves through suppression or separation. There is no doubt in my mind that I distract myself to avoid dealing with emotions, and as a result, suppress it inside my body.

With some individual guidance from Saki Santorelli at the retreat, I was able to explore, surrender, and release what was unconsciously buried. Both Saki Santorelli and

Jon Kabat-Zinn utilize the Socratic Method when facilitating their mindfulness meditation sessions. The Socratic Method is an educational approach utilized to promote discovery through the use of questions (Overholser, 2013). The questions incite dialogue and discussion, and encourage critical thinking (Overholser, 2013). As an adult educator I find this method very useful, and as a participant at this retreat, it was incredibly effective for me.

When I discussed this experience with Saki Santorelli the first question he asked me was "how do you ground yourself when you encounter strong emotion?" My response was that I use the breath. I have used my breath as a tool to centre myself and bring me back to the present for many years. He then smiled gently and looked at me with his wise eyes and said, "do not allow your breath to sweep away emotions; be with them, allow them in to the extent that you are comfortable with, and trust that you can handle whatever emerges." I got tears in my eyes as I found this simple advice so sensible yet healing at the same time.

Santorelli (1999) discusses three different methods to work with fear through mindfulness meditation. The first method is to simply notice the fear and not allow the breath to sweep it away. The thought is to gradually soften and be with the feelings, just as they are. As described in my personal situation above, trust that you can manage whatever comes up.

The second method is to establish a sense of trust between yourself and fear, and look more willingly towards it. The result is a feeling of life enlarging; openings into areas that have not been explored before. The feeling of safety is maintained as there is still trust to be able to manage what is happening. This is also maintained physiologically

through feeling the sitting bones on the floor, your spine lengthening to the ceiling, and the breath moving in and out consistently (Santorelli, 1999).

The third method is to become more familiar with the terrain of fear and become acquainted with the possibility of surrendering to it (Santorelli, 1999). I have to admit that the word *surrender* does not come into my vocabulary often; however, Santorelli (1999) states that "the capacity to allow for moments like this is mindfulness itself" (p. 137). This is the journey.

As an educator, learning to work with anxiety and fear has been transformational. I can plan out my curriculum, the activities, and the materials required. I am not able to plan for all the concerns that come up throughout a class. I am not able to plan for student reactions. I have discovered that some of the best learning is acquired through discussion and debate, and following and unpacking student thoughts and reactions. I have learned to be confident and calm when facilitating, and trust that I can handle what comes up. What I find most interesting is that *calm* has been the most common word used to describe my facilitation style. It has taken a long time to get there, and mindfulness meditation played a pivotal role in my educator development.

Managing this anxiety and fear continues to be the work of a lifetime. I am constantly amazed at the feelings that arise during my personal practice, and how much this has to do with feelings of safety and security. Palmer (1998) offers "I will always have fears, but I need not be my fears—for there are other places in my inner landscape from which I can speak and act" (p. 58). My mental health, well-being, and subsequently my educator identity is much stronger and more authentic when I

maintain an invigorating personal practice and renew myself through mindfulness meditation retreats.

Belongingness and Love

There are some days when I come to my practice where all I want to do is stop, roll my mat back up, and turn on the television. My mind is elsewhere and slowing down to find the present moment is like trying to stop a tornado. Kabat-Zinn (2012) states emphatically that "it is only fair for me to point out right from the start, again in the spirit of full disclosure, that the cultivation of mindfulness may just be the hardest work in the world" (p. 14). It certainly feels like the hardest work in the world on some occasions. The practice of coming back to the mat over and over again, regardless of the outcomes, is part of the work. This action however, is what stimulates the growth and development. A large part of my growth and development has been in the areas of emotions and identifying emotional needs. In my childhood home I was not encouraged to discuss or display emotion, and identifying this as a need represented internal conflict for me.

Maslow (1968) believed that if physiological and safety needs have been met, the next stage in the hierarchy of needs is to seek affiliation through friends, groups, or a partner. My reflection question on this topic is how has the practice of mindfulness meditation influenced my ability to connect with others as well as both give and accept love? The immediate, instinctual, and somewhat facetious response is: how has it not had an impact? Mindfulness offers the opportunity to notice our habits, patterns, and assumptions (Kabat-Zinn, 1991, 1994; Salzberg, 2011). The views held can be somewhat distorted as they contain our bias, history, and experiences. Mindfulness is a way out of the reflexive reactions to experiences as it helps break the legends and myths that are

woven throughout our lives (Salzberg, 2011). There is an offering to see life through different and more loving eyes.

Approximately 15 years ago, I was on the way home from a mindful yoga and meditation class. While I was driving it suddenly dawned on me that this practice is simply a reflection of myself. The feelings of fatigue, elation, frustration, or joy all come from within, and are an expression of who I am. In realizing this, there were tremendous feelings of love and self-acceptance. In addition to this, I also realized that this connection was with me all the time. More specifically I became aware that these practices lived within me. In the action of traveling to a class, I felt as though the connection I felt to myself and my body would only ever happen in class. What I was realizing was that the connection is there all the time. I simply need to take a mindful breath and I will find it.

This realization was profound. It was like discovering a soulful friend who travels with you wherever you go. This allowed me to significantly soften my approach to the practice. I approached it with more awareness, gently unpacking emotions that surfaced rather than becoming frustrated that I could not focus, and explored automatic reactions with more curiosity rather than judgement. As an educator, this has assisted me to connect with students with a sense of openness and interest, rather than fear of not knowing the answer. I try to be "confident enough to be vulnerable, secure enough to resign myself to the course of things" (Zajonc, 2006, p. 1747).

There are different types of meditative practice that focus specifically on belongingness and love. One example is the loving kindness meditation. This meditation offers the opportunity to invite a sense of kindness and acceptance to arise in one's heart

(Kabat-Zinn, 1994). The invitation is to stay with this until it radiates throughout the body, and to hold this positive energy in awareness. This meditation can stay focused on oneself, extend to others, and even reach out to the world.

A second example is a meditation that focuses on the cultivation of compassion. This meditation refers to where the person focuses on the well-being of others (Miller, 2014). In this meditation, individuals start with their focus on the outside world, and cultivate feelings of compassion for those they know and love, as well as those they do not know (Salzberg, 2014). From a scientific standpoint, it has been found that compassion meditation strengthens the connections between the prefrontal cortex and other brain regions important for empathy (Davidson, 2012).

These meditations have always been part of my practice, particularly since my children were born. As soon as they became part of my life, I have found a different kind of love. It is pure, unwavering, and whole; more commonly described as *unconditional love*. Parenting can be extremely challenging and on very trying days, the best way I can connect with my children is through a loving kindness meditation.

Speaking as a yoga teacher, facilitating this meditation or a mindful yoga practice focused on the heart has yielded some amazing experiences. After a class that had a loving kindness meditation at the end, a student stayed back to speak with me. She opened her mouth to speak and before any words could come out, she started crying. I stayed silent but present, as intuitively I felt she did not need to hear my words at that moment. When she was able to speak she simply said that it had been a long time since anyone had offered her the space to be loving and kind to herself.

In another experience after a mindful yoga class that focused on opening the

heart, another student stayed behind. She remarked that she felt much more open, free, and had found her way back home. I questioned where home was to her and she replied by putting her hand on her heart. It is important to note that in sharing these experiences, I am not commenting on my ability to teach. I am presenting these vignettes as a way to illustrate the impact that loving kindness can have on people today. Despite the abundance of resources, opportunities, and knowledge in North America, I believe there is a lot of personal suffering in our world, with many people feeling isolated and alone. Kabat-Zinn (1994) states "in our society, one might speak of an epidemic of low self-esteem" (p. 162). I strongly believe that loving kindness and compassion are important characteristics to continue to grow and share.

Esteem Needs

One of the principles of mindfulness meditation is non-striving (Kabat-Zinn 1991). The belief is that meditation is about non-doing and there is no goal other than to be who you are. This does sound foreign when our society "reinforces the personal ego, which spends most of the day planning, striving, and competing" (Miller, 2014, p. 7). My full-time work is in human resources and adult education within a healthcare environment, and I find the principle of non-striving challenging at times. The social structure surrounding us consistently reinforces the ego through competition and fear (Miller, 2014). The work of meditation is to become witness to this activity, to notice habits and patterns that may be destructive, and learn from them (Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Miller 2014).

I did not grow up with a healthy sense of self-esteem. As discussed earlier, there was little reinforcement in learning to trust in self. My esteem began to grow through a combination of my meditation practice and through my career. I was consistently

reinforced throughout my career with promotions and increased responsibility. My work life became so chaotic at one point where I had to leave a job that I loved. I was travelling too much, not spending time with my children, and my marriage began to show signs of strain. Miller (2014) believes that if the ego is too invested in one role that is played, one will suffer tremendously when that role is taken away. I suffered during this adjustment period, and felt like I lost part of my identity.

During this time I turned to loving kindness and compassion meditation. Selfishly this meditation was focused on myself first as I felt I needed time to heal, although I did spend a significant amount of time focused on my family. Compassion is defined as "the heart that trembles in the face of suffering" (Feldman & Kuyken, 2011, p. 144). My central question during this time was how can I continue to work without it taking over my entire life? I noticed fleeting moments during meditation of what felt like the ego and the heart, both struggling for attention.

Mindfulness meditation can be a powerful meditator between the head and the heart; between the ego and vulnerability. Palmer (1998) refers to this as *conquering the divide*. With time and practice, one can observe thoughts dispassionately, observing them in an open space rather than rushing in to rationally analyze them (Webster-Wright, 2013). During this time mindfulness meditation was a tool that supported me with the chaos that lived in my mind. I felt tremendous sadness at this transition point, and mindfulness meditation acted as a safe, loving, and intimate space to return.

This is not to be confused with *an escape*. Mindfulness meditation is not about escaping reality. Rather, it is about cultivating an intimate connection with oneself—the good, the bad, and the ugly—and holding all of this with compassion and tenderness

(Kabat-Zinn, 2012). There is a sense of unconditional love and acceptance of oneself in the cultivation of this practice. As Kabat-Zinn and Santorelli discussed at the retreat, mindfulness meditation explores our conditioned responses to emotions such as stress, fear, and anger. These emotions are held in awareness and are befriended as part of who we are. The practice of mindfulness meditation is not to judge or ridicule; it is to accept what is felt and be curious about it. In this case it was a loss of esteem and an acceptance of the fears around change.

Change requires one to accept a certain amount of vulnerability (Brown, 2012). As Bridges (1991) states "before you can begin something new, you have to end what used to be" (p. 23). Letting go and surrendering to the unknown is often the hardest part for people (Santorelli, 2011). It is believed that people have a hard time letting go of their suffering (Nhất Hahn, 1991). Out of a fear of the unknown, they prefer suffering that is familiar (Nhất Hahn, 1991).

In my experience I have found that there is usually something that happens which triggers the decision to try a new path. In this case it was my belief that I was not living my life in a way I was proud of. It was more painful to continue this way of life than trying a new path (Bridges, 1991). This change led me to fit my career around my family, and not the family around my career.

During this time I remember looking at my eldest daughter and realizing that she was growing up before my eyes. What she wanted most at that time was to be with me. How ironic that I spent so much time away from home building my career, thinking that I was a role model to her, when all she wanted was my undivided attention and presence.

> The most precious gift you can make to your loved one is not money, or fame, but your true presence. To love means to be present for him. How can you love if you are not there? And the quality of your presence is very important. You have to be there, fresh, loving, understanding. Through the practice of mindful breathing, and mindful walking, you bring your mind back to your body, you establish yourself in the here and now, you are fully present. (Nhất Hanh, 2007, p. 117)

It is believed that offering full presence to another is the greatest gift that a person can offer (Cohen, 2009). Cohen (2009) believes that presence involves listening with the ears and mind but also with the heart. It is being mindfully and wholeheartedly present with another. The ego is softened and more silent as presence brings us into the here and now (Tolle, 2005). This illustrates my experience as I began to connect with my family in a different way—non-distracted, fully attentive, and wholeheartedly present. This also describes my experience as an educator. I have transitioned from the goal of *sage on the stage* to *guide by the side*. As an adult educator, my students either know the answers or they know where to find them (Overholser, 2013). My job is to challenge them and ask questions to stimulate discussion. My ego and ambitions are still very much alive, but mindfulness meditation is the tool that assists in the meditation between the head and the heart.

Self-Actualization

Mindfulness meditation offers the opportunity to learn the craft of opening up and relaxing our resistance to life (Santorelli, 1999). Part of the resistance can be managed by accepting that the mind is cluttered with thoughts; the work is simply to breathe in awareness, and let go of our need to control (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). I feel that this is the

most challenging part of life at times—accepting what I cannot control. As time marches on I realize how little I actually control. The only things I can truly control are my thoughts, my reactions to events, and living my life in a way that aligns with my values. This realization came with a certain amount of vulnerability (Brown, 2012), and yet a feeling of connectedness to the universe (Kabat-Zinn, 2012).

Maslow posited that self-actualization was about one fulfilling their personal potential (Koltko-Rivera, 2006). It is believed that the high self-actualizing person channels maximum effort towards their development potential (Beitel et al., 2014). With this need there is a sense that one is doing what one was meant to do. I have pondered this question quite a bit: am I doing what I was meant to do? I know I am not alone in asking this question. As a human resources professional I have been part of discussions with individuals who are pondering this. They are considering leaving the organization or their profession as it lacks fulfillment for them. After a number of years in a certain career, this can be a very challenging decision to make. From my own experience, it is typically fraught with conflicting emotions.

Educator attrition is high in the early years of teaching (Schaefer, 2013). Schaefer (2013) offers the concern that she has watched her colleagues enter the education profession, stating that it was their lifelong passion, only to leave a few years later. Furthermore, as Huberman (1989) offers in his Model of Teacher Development, the stock-taking/interrogations path is taken when a teacher becomes disgruntled with the profession. Teachers who follow this path can become negative and unhappy with their career choice.

I believe there is a balance that we must keep when we progress through Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs. If individuals are competent in their position, feel a

sense of belongingness and esteem in their environment, but dislike what they do, this can create a loss of satisfaction with life and consequently create stressful circumstances (Salzberg, 2014). It is important to note that there are times in life when we must work for money rather than meaning. I have met several people during my career that have openly admitted this fact. If, however, individuals do not receive fulfillment from their work, and it has been a long term situation, Palmer (1998) offers the inquiry question of "what brings me more security in the long run: holding this job or honoring my soul?" (p. 32).

Sometimes the best thing we can do for ourselves it to embrace the unknown and try a developmental project, a different path, or a new career altogether. My husband became a police officer at the age of 36 when his successful sales career was no longer fulfilling. He noticed that he was becoming quite negative and highly stressed on a regular basis. He embraced vulnerability and all the associated fear, and jumped into his new career with the assumption that it would be okay. Similar to my husband, I left a stable position with a strong organization after 12 years. I encountered much more fear than confidence with my decision but somehow I knew it was the right thing for my life and my family. Santorelli (2011) discusses that there is a point where we see situations clearly, exactly as they are, and the opportunity is to surrender to the unknown.

In reviewing some of the guiding principles of mindfulness meditation, it seems contrary to this practice to consider self-actualization. The principle of non-striving in particular seems to be the opposite of this need. As I discussed in the last section on esteem, I believe that mindfulness meditation acts as a mediator between the head and the heart. There have been many times when I have sat down for meditation practice and the first five minutes is devoted to slowing down ambitions and softening the heart.

Despite this, I do not believe that the relationship between self-actualization and mindfulness meditation is only about mediation. I believe there are also experiential aspects of these two processes that are similar. Beitel et al. (2014) offer some positive associations between self-actualization and mindfulness meditation. One association is that they involve openness to experience, and second association is that the subjective experience of a mindful moment and a self-actualizing moment can be similar in nature.

In considering openness to experience, Kabat-Zinn (1994) discusses becoming aware of each individual moment through mindfulness meditation. The present moment is the only guarantee, as the next may be dramatically different. One must come with an openness to feel the present moment and truly experience it.

> To allow ourselves to be truly in touch with where we already are, no matter where that is, we have got to pause in our experience long enough to let the present moment sink in; long enough to actually *feel* the present moment, to see it in its fullest, to hold it in awareness and thereby come to know and understand it better. (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. xiv)

In addition to this, it is believed that individuals who are self-actualized can appreciate the fluidity of life and experiences (Beitel et al., 2014). It is not static and event driven; rather a more free flowing process.

Mindfulness meditation has also taught me to embrace the totality of experience. Throughout my life I have tried to separate those aspects that are inexplicably joined together. I operated in more of an event-driven pattern; viewing each experience with a start and a finish as it was easier to control this way. In actual fact, events blend into one

another with fluidity and no true beginning or end. Over time I realized that if I did not embrace the whole, I missed out on thousands of moments of life, love, and laughter.

Mindfulness meditation has taught me to embrace the whole without suspicion or judgement, and notice when I am moving too far in a negative direction. This self-knowledge has been transformative for me as I always believed that I should quash the negative. The negative is there and it will always be there. However, if I approach it with a questioning mindset—What can I learn from this? What is this trying to tell me?—the power tends to diminish as I consider these questions in more of an abstract form, rather than a sequential pattern. Although very difficult, I try to embrace the principle of non-attachment, be open to the experience, and allow the question to be answered in its own time. This realization has also assisted me as an educator. I believe I more fully appreciate different learning styles, and understand that thoughts jumping around can simply be one's approach to learning.

The subjective experience of mindfulness meditation and self-actualization is considered to be similar (Beitel et al., 2014). Peak experiences have been discussed by Maslow as part of self-actualization (Beitel et al., 2014; Koltko-Rivera, 2006). It can be defined as phenomena such as mystical, aesthetic, or emotional experiences (Koltko-Rivera, 2006). These types of peak experiences can occur in mindfulness meditation as well.

I was fortunate to have a peak experience so profound that it shook me for months afterwards. I was at a mindful yoga and meditation weekend retreat. It happened after a deep yoga practice, and then a reflective, silent walking meditation in the woods. While I was walking I suddenly burst into tears. It is important to note that this was highly

unusual behaviour for me. I was raised by a family where demonstrating emotion, particularly publicly, was not permitted.

This emotion surfaced due to the understanding of what was stopping me from having children. My husband was ready to start a family but I was strongly hesitant. This was something that we always talked about and I thought I wanted; however, something was preventing me from moving forward. I realized that day that I was hesitant to start a family because I thought my children would be like me. At that moment I experienced such strong compassion for myself. I had no idea how little I valued or loved myself.

Something shifted in me that day that caused me to question my life, my opinion of myself, and how I was interacting with the world. I began to analyze the narrative that was running through my head—what did I really believe about myself and how were my thoughts feeding these destructive patterns? Although it was tremendously painful at the time, this experience caused me to grow in ways that I could never have imagined. This was a transformative moment that I encountered in conjunction with mindfulness meditation, and it impacted my need for self-actualization. I challenged myself to fulfil my personal potential through nurturing my children and my family, and growing alongside them as we moved through stages of life together.

Self-Transcendence

In recent years theorists have postulated the notion that before Maslow died, he identified a sixth tier of need that he called self-transcendence (Kolkto-Rivera, 2006; Venter & Venter, 2010). This need represents the ability to "further a cause beyond the self and to experience a communion beyond the boundaries of the self" (Kolkto-Rivera,

2006, p. 303). Venter and Venter (2010) discuss that in identifying this sixth level, Maslow believed very few people were capable of reaching it.

The main difference between self-actualization and self-transcendence is what is coined as *Being-cognition*. Peak experiences can lead the self-actualized person to transcend the very self that was being actualized. If they are able to experience a connection with something or someone outside of themselves as a result of this peak moment, this is defined as Being-cognition (Kolkto-Rivera, 2006). There is a sense that such persons have become egoless as they are connecting with that which is more than themselves (Kolkto-Rivera, 2006; Venter & Venter, 2010).

In considering these thoughts on self-transcendence, it sounds intimidating and somewhat imposing. Have I ever really had experiences in mindfulness meditation that are considered self-transcendent? If I consider the definition of meditation that is offered below, it seems as though this is the ultimate goal of this practice:

> Mindfulness is awareness, cultivated by paying attention in a sustained and particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally. It is one of many forms of meditation, if you think of meditation as any way in which we engage in (1) systematically regulating our attention and energy (2) thereby influencing and possibly transforming the quality of our experience (3) in the service of realizing the full range of our humanity and of (4) our relationships to others and the world. (Kabat-Zinn, 2012, p. 1)

I believe that it is the cultivation of a long-term practice that supports self-transcendence. If I recall the first few weeks of practice, it was about understanding the technical aspects of practice. After 16 years of consistent practice, I feel like a beginner

in many respects, yet experienced in others. The agitation, the frustrations, the impatience, the mind wandering, is all part of this work and happens every time I roll out my mat. The beauty of connecting with something so inspiring and authentic is also part of this practice, but certainly does not happen as right away, or as often.

I tend to encounter a lot of fear in my practice, particularly when I first started. Some of my most profound experiences with mindfulness meditation have been in conjunction with learning to work with this fear. If fear will be something that comes up consistently for me, how can I learn to live with it in a productive way? In reflecting on experiences that can be classified as self-transcendent, the most memorable ones have been associated with lifting up and outside of feelings of fear.

One example of this was during the time my husband was away at Police College. As I discussed earlier, policing was a second career for him. He left for training with my support; however, I had no idea of the mixed emotions that I would feel in making this change. I recall speaking with people about his new career and the most popular comment I heard back was that I was crazy for allowing this change to happen. Needless to say, this did not help my level of anxiety. My practice during this time was primarily about managing fears surrounding feeling like a single parent with two children under the age of 4, holding a big job that required a lot of travel, and feeling alone and unsupported. Sitting down to practice the first thing I always noticed were my racing thoughts and how scared they were in nature. How am I going to be able to manage this and not let my children down? Will my marriage stay together? Am I going to fail? These thoughts invaded my practice frequently during this time. Normally I meditate in the evening but

at this time, I had no choice but to practice at night in order to have a peaceful sleep. One meditation experience occurred during this time that changed everything.

I sat down in my typical fashion as I normally would, centred myself through breath, and waited for my thoughts to jump around restlessly as they usually did during this time. I recall feeling such sadness and grief with what was happening that it was difficult to sit still. I allowed these feelings to come in and the thought came in my head of *how can I cope with this?* There was an immediate, almost instinctual reply of *everything is just fine, exactly as it is*. I did not question where that thought came from, whose voice it was, or even tried to attach myself to it. I followed the thought and found the ability, figuratively speaking, to lift myself off the ground and become larger. There was a feeling that it was no longer just me, that there was a connection with the universe. I even felt expansiveness in my chest and ribs, and my shoulder blades widen as though they were angel wings. It was a beautiful moment that felt peaceful, supportive, and nurturing.

This type of event does not happen on a regular basis for me; however, I have retained the feelings of connecting with life outside myself. This feeling was so profound and life altering I cannot help but keep it in my heart. I find the ability to recall this experience and these feelings typically when I am in silence, and usually when I am connected with nature in some way. Silence is a powerful healing modality for me, and nature helps remind me that my problems are of my own invention, and that everything is just fine, exactly as it is. There is something about these two elements that support my ability to rise above the current circumstances, and helps foster the notion of Being-cognition (Kolkto-Rivera, 2006).

What is it about mindfulness meditation practice that encourages change and, potentially, self-transcendence? The practical side of me likes scientific evidence and tangible proof; however, I realize that not everything can be explained. Was this voice that came up real? If so, whose was it? I will never receive answers for these questions but I am interested in understanding how someone like me, who likes this kind of proof, is willing to intuitively trust this experience.

Teasdale and Chaskalson (2011) believe that mindfulness transforms suffering through three different strategies. The first strategy is that the mind changes what it is processing. It is believed that what we pay attention to is dictated by our automatic, habitual biases (Kabat-Zinn, 1991; Santorelli, 1999; Teasdale & Chaskalson, 2011). This can change through paying attention and switching the thought pattern from the biased automatic reaction, to sensations of the breath or sound. Kabat-Zinn (2012) discussed that our "thought-habits actually distort reality, create illusions and delusions, and ultimately imprison us" (p. 42). In my personal example I believe I was filled with emotion at that point, allowed the feelings to come in alongside the breath, and this resulted in the pattern breaking for that moment.

Strategy two is defined by Teasdale and Chaskalson (2011) as changes in how the mind processes experiences. It is believed that mindfulness practice cultivates a more direct, intuitive, and experiential way of knowing experience. Mindfulness transforms the way the mind processes experiences so that the conditions no longer support the continuation of the pattern (Teasdale & Chaskalson, 2011). Through research on the brain by Murakami et al. (2012), it has been found mindfulness meditation is associated with brain structures in the right anterior insula and right amygdala. In experienced

mindfulness meditators the right anterior insula is more developed. This is correlated with more awareness of emotions, including stress, and this may enable individuals to exert more control over their emotions. In addition, the changes found in the right amygdala suggest that experienced meditators may have superior cognitive control of the emotional responses by the prefrontal cortex.

Through my experience as a practising meditator, I feel changes in my reactions to experiences. It is not possible for me to measure what is happening in my brain, but I feel intuitively that my reactions are calmer, slower, and I can more easily see the big picture. As a result of the experience that I presented earlier, I feel like I am part of a whole, and that regardless of the circumstances, I am not alone.

Strategy three is defined by Teasdale and Chaskalson (2011) as changing the view of what is being processed. This means there is a cultivation of processing experiences through different lenses. These lenses are not necessarily only ego-centric; they could be an impact to others or impact to the world. This new way of processing information is stored as a new mental model and serves to support changes in the future (Teasdale & Chaskalson, 2011). In connecting this strategy to my experience, I can certainly relate that it supported my future views of life and how I process information.

Summary

This chapter was a representation of my experiences with mindfulness meditation and how this influenced my personal and professional development. I outlined experiences that I have had in each level of the pyramid, including the sixth tier of motivation which is self-transcendence. I believe that self-transcendence is the ultimate goal of meditation, but it is only possible to move to that level with regular, consistent

practice. Experiences were identified through using Mezirow's transformative learning theory as the guide.

Taking the time to understand what the true impact of mindfulness meditation has been on my personal and professional development has been an insightful journey. I realized that mindfulness meditation consistently offered me wisdom, depth, and opens the door to healing. As Nhất Hanh (2006) states, "when the body and mind are one, the wounds in our hearts, minds and bodies begin to heal" (p. 38). The final chapter of this research project will apply the learning acquired from this self-study, and will present a model of self-reflection that will summarize these lessons.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to examine the use of mindfulness meditation in educator professional growth and development. Mindfulness meditation is presented in this research as a support in educator personal and professional development (Webster-Wright, 2013; Zajonc, 2006). This chapter will focus on discussing the results of my self-study as well as applying the learning acquired. Based on this learning, I propose guiding principles as well as a model of self-reflection that combines Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs and Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory with the Socratic Method. I will then conclude this study with a discussion on future research as well as lessons learned.

Before the guiding principles are presented, I offer some discussion on the elements of silence and nature. I am including this section as I was struck during the analysis of my self-study, how often these two elements either provided support or were a catalyst for transformation. This analysis is presented as an additional element to my learning and will be integrated as a recommendation in the model of self-reflection.

The Elements of Silence and Nature

Tolle (2005) states "at the heart of the new consciousness lies the transcendence of thought, the newfound ability of rising above thought, of realizing a dimension within yourself that is infinitely more vast than thought" (p. 21). Nature and silence act as wise teachers and support my ability to rise above thought, particularly thoughts that may be stressful. As it was discovered through my self-study that these two elements were identified as factors in change, this next section will explore silence and nature as a teacher in greater detail.

Looking at this from an educational perspective, silence in the classroom has

several paradoxical meanings (Schultz, 2012). Silence can mean intense engagement and deep thought, or it can be disengagement and lack of productivity (Schultz, 2012; VanSlyke-Briggs, 2014). It can even mean disrespect or insubordination from a student to a teacher (Schultz, 2012; VanSlyke-Briggs, 2014). Imposed silence can also be uncomfortable as instinctually, many people want to jump into conversation (Cain, 2012; VanSlyke-Briggs, 2014).

Our current age has been referred to as *continuous partial attention* (Ludwig & Kabat-Zinn, 2008). Emails, cell phones, IPads, and other technologies invade nearly every moment of our waking lives, and it is a challenge to minimize the connectivity (Ludwig & Kabat-Zinn, 2008). How well do we know ourselves if we are in *continuous partial attention*? What is possible when we are disconnected, silent, and attentive for a period of time?

> How necessary I came to see this quiet time, not just in my personal life, but also in my work as a writer, a researcher, and educator. I came to rely on it not only as a respite from the cluttered hubbub of the daily world, but also as a much-needed source of creative and intellectual energy and renewal. (Dawson, 2003, p. 33)

It is apparent through my self-study that silence was a catalyst for deep, transformative experiences. In addition to this, I believe that society is out of balance in regards to our dependency and reliance on technology, social media, and internet connectivity (Dawson, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 2012; Posen, 2013; Webster-Wright, 2013). In fact, it is thought that "in our modern society more and more individuals fear stillness" (Camahalan, 2006, p. 2). Dawson (2003) offers "the space for such stillness has been seriously eroded by the frantic culture of overwork that is now taken for granted or

grudgingly tolerated" (p. 37). With these points in mind, silence is an element that educators may want to consider utilizing more often and seeing if this makes a difference in their practice.

I have spent much of my life in search of silent moments. Silence acts as a respite for me in regaining energy lost throughout the day (Cain, 2012). Cain (2012) describes this need as a classic introverted tendency which may not be well suited for those who are more extroverted in nature. However, silence also allows me the opportunity to monitor the narrative running through my head that the noise of the day distracts me from hearing (Blanton, 2007). It quiets the language processing areas of the left hemisphere of the brain, and creates a rare opportunity to become intimate with the mind (Siegel, 2007).

Nature as a Teacher

I find something inspiring about nature. It is so still, quietly beautiful, and adaptive. Kabat-Zinn (1994) discusses using mountains as a metaphor for strength, simplicity, and presence:

> As the light changes, as night follows day and day night, the mountain just sits, simply being itself. It remains still as the seasons flow into one another and as the weather changes moment by moment and day by day. Calmness abiding all change. (p. 137)

As humans we can embody these same qualities, and it is inspiring to be surrounded by it. The force of life in nature is astonishingly strong (Scaravelli, 1991). Scaravelli (1991) believes that people need natural beauty around them and encourages the utilization of "nature where the miracle of existence is renewed each day" (p. 97). I am constantly amazed at how my problems seem so big and insurmountable at times.

During moments like these, when I situate myself in the middle of a forest or near a large body of water, my problems somehow shrink to feel small and insignificant. I feel a natural, effortless reduction in tension and anxiety.

Nature also offers the opportunity to bring us into the present moment. Brandy (2014) offers "when I think of outdoor experiences I feel an awakened sensibility" (p. 31). There is an increased awareness of the senses through the richness of colours, sounds, and natural scents (Brandy, 2014). It can be easy to find mindful moments when a facilitator asks simple questions such as: *What do you hear? What can you see? What can you smell?*

Nature has played a role in my personal transformative experiences. It did not necessarily cause me to question my points of view or habits of mind, but it certainly played a role in supporting me through discourse (Mezirow, 1991). I have turned to nature to calm anxieties and fears, and to bring perspective to what I was wrestling with. It has also brought a calming, wise, and trusting presence to emotional moments. Mindfulness meditation offers the opportunity to get to know yourself in a deep and profound way (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Salzberg, 2014; Santorelli, 1999). Sometimes the emotions that come up are frightening and are not welcome (Santorelli, 1999), and nature can offer support and wisdom in a simplistic and helpful manner (Miller, 2007).

It was noticed during the analysis of my self-study that these two elements were factors in change. As a result of this I felt it was important to discuss them further and utilize them in the creation of this model. Similar to my experience, one will see that these elements are offered in the model of self-reflection indirectly and in a supportive manner, rather than direct and forced experience. The guiding principles presented next act as an overarching structure for the model, and are a representation of how

mindfulness meditation has impacted my personal and professional development.

Guiding Principles

Brookfield (1995) believes that the autobiographical lens or self-reflection is the foundation of critical reflection. It is important to have an understanding of our values, beliefs, and needs as human beings, and what we need in place to operate at our best. Palmer (1998) notes that "teaching, like any human activity, emerges from one's inwardness, for better or worse" (p. 2). We need to be aware of our needs and vulnerabilities as educators and engage in a learning process with them. If the natural curiosity that feeds self-reflection declines, we fall prey to becoming more of a "human doing, rather than a human being" and forget who we are (Kabat-Zinn, 2013, p. 18). *Who am I as a person? Who am I as an Educator?*

Teaching is done at the intersection of public and personal life, and this makes educators open to judgement, ridicule, and indifference (Palmer, 1998). To mitigate the risk of painful emotions, Palmer (1998) states "to reduce our vulnerability, we disconnect from students, from subjects, and even from ourselves" (p. 18). In my career in human resources I have witnessed people putting up an invisible shield to protect themselves against risk. One thing that has been abundantly clear in these emotional situations is that people always have a choice. They have a choice in how they react, in how they live their life, and in their career development. What I believe occurs is that some people forget they have a choice, become blinded by their emotions, and become stuck in an automatic routine that although is uncomfortable, it feels safer than change does (Bridges, 1991; Brown, 2012; Posen, 2013).

Maslow (1968) posited we have a common preference for familiar rather than unfamiliar things, and we seek safety through routines and predictability. From a personal

standpoint, I noted in my self-study that it was easy to stay within my safe patterns and avoid feeling vulnerable; however, my powerful reminder to step outside the boundaries on occasion was through understanding that vulnerability is also the "birthplace of love, belonging, joy, courage, empathy, and creativity" (Brown, 2012, p. 34). Through the self-study discovery process, I found that mindfulness meditation provided a safe and supportive platform for me when I chose to step outside my invisible boundaries. I realized that this tool offered me the opportunity to move forward into areas that I was scared of, but to do it in a way that I had knew I could manage.

> Mindfulness provides a simple but powerful route for getting ourselves unstuck, back into touch with our own wisdom and vitality. It is a way to take charge of the direction and quality of our own lives, including our relationships within the family, our relationship to work and to the larger world and planet, and most fundamentally, our relationship with ourself as a person. (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 5)

This illustrates one of the lessons that I discovered from my self-study. Mindfulness meditation is a tool that has provided me with roots so I could grow both personally and professionally. With this in mind, I created guiding principles that are a representation of how mindfulness meditation has impacted my development as a person and an educator. These guiding principles are:

1. To mindfully connect with one's authentic being;
2. To learn how to navigate through periods of anticipated and unanticipated change and stress;
3. To become witness to, and not victim of, the narrative in one's head.

The principles encourage me to stay grounded, focused, and open to experiences. As an

educator, these principles remind me to be present, in the moment with students when I am teaching, and trust that I can manage whatever comes up. In addition, these principles act as the overarching structure for a proposed model of self-reflection which will be presented in this next section.

Model of Self-Reflection

Brookfield (1995) argues that educators need a specific focus—*a critical incident*—in order to understand the true benefits of reflection. Until then educators are trapped within the perceptual frameworks that determines how experiences are viewed (Brookfield, 1995). Brookfield (1995) offers that educators need useful lenses that highlight who we are and what we do. The lens that I am offering in this model is an approach of asking probing questions—the Socratic Method. By utilizing the Socratic Method, the belief is that individuals will stop and critically reflect on their opinions, assumptions, and any potential biases that they may carry (Kidd, 1992). I was inspired to take this approach when at the retreat with Jon Kabat-Zinn and Saki Santorelli. They used this methodology and it yielded consistent positive feedback from me as well as other participants.

Having attended many retreats over the years, transformative experiences are obviously never guaranteed. What is guaranteed is the opportunity to become aware of the narrative that runs through one's head (Teasdale & Chaskalson, 2011). When asked the right question during a mindfulness meditation session either through the facilitator, or through introspective reflection, I was able to either move to a deeper level, or look at the narrative through a different lens due to the simple awareness of those thoughts (Overholser, 2013).

After completing my self-study, the learning that I acquired pointed me towards

creating a model for self-reflection, using mindfulness meditation as the tool. I found that mindfulness meditation has had an impact on my personal and professional development, and acted as a form of reflective practice.

> Critical inquiry, that is active, social and dialogical, may productively seed the field of thought, providing fertile ground for innovative ideas to contemplate. Together, mindfulness and inquiry may nurture the creative potential of reflective thought as well as focus subsequent action. (Webster-Wright, 2013, p. 557)

The guiding principles presented earlier act as the overarching structure for this model of self-reflection, and each question will be crafted with these in mind. Furthermore, these questions will be created based on knowledge gained from my self-study, and the conceptual frameworks chosen for this project which were Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs as well as Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory. In essence, I would like to promote critical reflection and potentially discourse (Mezirow, 1991) via the Socratic Method, to guide an educator through Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs. It is important to note that I am not so bold to think that this proposed model will guide someone to self-transcendence. I am simply offering this model and these questions as a way of representing the integration of my own personal reflections from this self-study.

Table 1 illustrates the model of self-reflection that I created. It was built based on the conceptual frameworks offered by Maslow and Mezirow, and offers the educator guiding questions. The use of Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs is presented in the left-hand column, and Mezirow's (1991) transformational learning theory is presented along the top.

Table 1

Model of Self-Reflection

	Mezirow's (1991) transformational learning theory		
Maslow (1968)	Points of view	Habits of mind	Frames of reference
Physiological	What did I notice during my practice today?	What is different? What is the same?	How do these thoughts impact me as an Educator? How do these thoughts impact other roles that I play in my life?
Safety	How am I feeling today?	What is different? What is the same?	How are these thoughts impacting my experience? What can change them?
Belongingness and love	What thoughts were running through my head today?	When have these thoughts come up before?	If I opened myself up to more compassion what could change?
Esteem	What emotions came up for me today?	When have these emotions come up before?	What supports me with these emotions? What, if anything, can I do to change them? How can I best support myself with them? How does this impact my work?
Self-actualization	Who are you as an Educator? What were the reasons for choosing to become an educator?	What kind of educator would you like to be? How have those reasons been fulfilled? How have they not been fulfilled?	How are you going to get there? What will help you? What may pose to be a threat? Where would you like to take your educational practice now?
Self-transcendence	How do you keep a connection to the bigger picture in mind? What are your spiritual needs and comforts?	When you take away the roles that you play (teacher, parent, sibling, etc.), who are you? At an authentic level, what gives meaning or purpose to your life?	What do you do to nurture that person? What do you do to nurture that purpose?

The questions that are presented in Table 1 were crafted with the Socratic Method in mind and are recommendations based on the learning from my self-study. This model of self-reflection is offered as a way to promote growth, notice assumptions, and any potential biases (Kidd, 1992).

I am also recommending that the educator's self-reflections be completed individually after a mindfulness meditation session and in an introspective manner via journaling, art, or any other silent option that makes sense for the educator. I also encourage the integration of nature in their reflections such as silent walking, sitting near water, or hiking in the trails. As discussed earlier in this project, society strongly embraces and encourages team work, extroversion, and chatter (Cain, 2012; VanSlyke-Briggs, 2014). Since our practices tend to be more reliant on social interaction (Cain, 2012) I would like to offer an alternative. This is not to say that I would not be supportive of sharing in a class setting. I am simply encouraging educators to keep the focus on themselves first, and not become distracted through the learning shared by their colleagues.

The caution for adding a structured reflective practice component in conjunction with mindfulness meditation is the potential for increase in thoughts, thought processes, and critical analysis during meditation sessions, when the focus is supposed to be on awareness and the present moment (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Santorelli, 1999); however, I noted in my self-study that when asked a question during a mindfulness meditation session—provided I kept my attention on the present moment and what was happening in my body and mind—this created possibilities for growth after the meditation was complete. For example, Dawson (2003) states that her mindfulness meditation classes were a "source of creative and intellectual enrichment in her academic work" (p. 35).

Dawson demonstrates that she grew professionally, and that her work as an educator was enhanced through utilizing mindfulness meditation.

In addition to this, the way this model is structured could mistakenly encourage educators to think that it is easy to change their frames of reference (Mezirow, 1991), or guide themselves through Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs. I am also quite sure there are other, more powerful questions that could be utilized. Again, this model is a representation of the learning I acquired through my self-study, and is simply being offered in that spirit.

Summary

This chapter focused on applying the learning from my self-study towards creating guiding principles and a model of self-reflection, using mindfulness meditation as the tool. This model utilized Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs, Mezirow's (1991) transformational learning theory, and the Socratic Method, and was created as an integration of my reflections and learning from the self-study.

Mindfulness meditation offers an opportunity for people to wake up to the beautiful unfolding of their life; to be present and aware of each moment as it is revealed (Kabat-Zinn, 2012). From an educational standpoint, this philosophy is important (Palmer, 1998). One never knows what activity, what statement, or what interaction will make a difference to a student. As an educator I try to keep this in mind: to be truly present when I am facilitating a class so I notice these details. I try to be open to discussion, change, and vulnerability, rather than staying within my safe boundaries. Mindfulness meditation supports me in the process of trying to be the kind of educator who opens space for their students, rather than occupying space (Palmer, 1998).

Future Research

Research on mindfulness meditation is increasing (Davis & Hayes, 2011; Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2011). Williams and Kabat-Zinn (2011) note that there was one study in 1982 on mindfulness meditation and 397 in 2011. When I first started this practice in 1998, it was difficult to find a class to attend. In 2014, one just needs to simply conduct an Internet search to find there are numerous courses offered, curriculums in various media, and notable people such as Congressman Tim Ryan discussing the benefits of mindfulness meditation. There is no doubt that I have only scratched the surface with what can be explored on this topic. In extending the focus of this research project, there are a few additional areas of research that I would recommend.

One avenue for research is to take these guiding principles and this model of self-reflection, and actually create a curriculum based on them. Then, I would be interested to test the curriculum model and explore if it has any impact. Mindfulness meditation is known to support people with managing their levels of stress (Baer, 2011; Baer et al., 2012; Kabat-Zinn, 1990, 1994, 2012; Santorelli, 1999), but I would like to understand if mindfulness meditation can support educators with more than managing stress. Can self-reflection can be more effective for educators if they practice mindfulness meditation?

In the literature that I found, researchers are also starting to review changes in the brain as a result of mindfulness meditation (Davis & Hayes, 2011; Holzel et al., 2010; Murakami et al., 2012. This is such an interesting focus of research and I believe there will be more acceptance and recognition from the medical, academic, and educational community if this continues. Research could be combined with testing mindfulness meditation curriculums with actual changes in the brain. I support this integration as I

believe it will further enhance wellness in our communities.

My last recommendation for further research is on the benefits of mindfulness meditation and silence in classrooms. I noticed throughout my research that some educators are starting to integrate these elements into their teaching practice (Camahalan, 2006; Schultz, 2012; VanSlyke-Briggs, 2014). As discussed, it is believed that society is suffering from *continuous partial attention* (Ludwig & Kabat-Zinn, 2008) due to the increase in technology and Internet connectivity (Dawson, 2003; Webster-Wright, 2013). I think it is important for the educational community to continue to experiment and research changes noticed in their classrooms when silence and mindfulness meditation are added into their curriculums. As I pointed out in the literature review, meditation can cause some concern as some people believe there is a religious component to it (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Mindfulness meditation will have to be more fully understood and accepted by society before it can be integrated well into classrooms. This awareness will most likely grow through continued research.

Lessons Learned

There have been many lessons learned along this major research project journey. The most notable one is that sometimes in taking a step back, two more effective steps can be taken forward. The path towards the completion of this project has not always been clear, but faith and wisdom in the form of my advisor appeared and helped keep it on track.

This project was a new adventure and taking a topic that I hold dear had aspects of love as well as challenge associated with it. Utilizing mindfulness meditation as a topic of research was much more difficult than I could have imagined. I assumed it would be a

labour of love and, at times, it certainly was. The downside was that the work was extremely personal. I am used to being much more neutral in my work, and it was very challenging to contain the passion at times, particularly since I utilized self-study as the methodology. My lesson learned here is simply: experience gained. If I continue research on this topic I will be more aware and prepared for this in the future.

Final Word

This project assisted me in clearly articulating how mindfulness meditation has supported my personal and professional development. It also supported the identification of some elements that are important for a mindfulness meditation practice for educators. At the end of this journey, the most important learning has been that mindfulness meditation has acted as an *anchor* for me. Kabat-Zinn (2012) believes that through a practice of mindfulness meditation, "we can return over and over to something deep within ourselves that is steady, that is reliable, that is whole—and that is not a thing" (p. 100). It has been something that I can turn to, trust, and count on for wisdom and guidance. As Kabat-Zinn and Santorelli discussed at the retreat, it is the hardest work in the world, yet somehow it is a labour of love. This is my life…what could be more important?

Taking part in a self-study has been an insightful and interesting journey as a person and an educator, and I am inspired to continue this research in some way; however, I am left with the thoughts surrounding the questions of: *mindfulness meditation made a difference to me, what difference could it make to someone else*? *What would inspire someone to try it?*

In reflecting on this question I decided to go back to the beginning, and asked myself *why did I start meditation and yoga in the first place?* The answer is very clearly:

stress and anxiety management. I was suffering and my quality of life was dramatically decreasing. At the end of this journey, I have found empirical evidence in the literature that mindfulness meditation can support people who are suffering from the effects of stress, anxiety, chronic pain, disease, disability, mental illness, among other challenging circumstances (Baer, 2011; Baer et al., 2012; Kabat-Zinn, 1990, 1994, 2012; Santorelli, 1999). The stress in people's lives now is so insidious that more and more people require a tool to help them deal with it (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Miller, 2014; Posen, 2013; Salzberg, 2014). Mindfulness meditation has made such a profound impact on my life and my ability to grow personally and professionally. I support and encourage the integration of this work into scientific communities, higher education centres, classrooms, and businesses, to offer others the opportunity to better manage their levels of stress and anxiety.

References

Asselin, M. (2011). Reflective narrative. *Journal for Nurses in Staff Development, 27*(1), 2-6. doi:10.1097/NND.0b013e3181b1ba1a

Baer, R. (2011). Measuring mindfulness. *Contemporary Buddhism, 12*(1), 241-261.

Baer, R., Carmody, J., & Hunsinger, M. (2012). Weekly change in mindfulness and perceived stress in a mindfulness-based stress reduction program. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, *68*(7), 755-765. doi:10.1002/jclp.21865

Beitel, M., Bogus, S., Hutz, A., Green, D., Cecero, J., & Barry, D. (2014). Stillness and motion: An empirical investigation of mindfulness and self-actualization. *Person-Centered & Experiential Psychotherapies*, *13*(3), 187-202. doi:10.1080/14779757.2013.855131

Blanton, P. G. (2007). Adding silence to stories: Narrative therapy and contemplation. *Contemporary Family Therapy*, *29*(4), 211-221. doi:10.1007/s10591-007-9047-x

Brandy, E. (2014). Thoughts on a writing journey: Autoethnography in outdoor education research and practice. *Pathways: The Ontario Journal of Outdoor Education, 26*(2), 31-34.

Bridges, W. (1991). *Managing transitions.* Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press.

Briggs Myers, I., & Myers, P. (1995). *Gifts differing*. Mountain View, CA: CPP.

Brookfield, S. (1995). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher.* San-Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Brown, A., Marquis, A., & Guiffrida, D. (2013). Mindfulness-based interventions in counseling. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 91,* 96-104. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6676.2013.00077

Brown, B. (2012). *Daring greatly.* New York, NY: Penguin.

Brown, K., & Ryan, R. (2003). The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 84*(4), 822-848.

Cain, S. (2012). *Quiet*. New York, NY: Crown.

Camahalan, F. (2006). Learning the lessons of silence. *The Teaching Professor, 20*(6), 2.

Carmody, J., & Baer, R. (2008). Relationships between mindfulness practice and levels of mindfulness, medical and psychological symptoms and well-being in a mindfulness-based stress reduction program. *Journal of Behavioural Medicine, 31*(1), 76-86.

Carmody, J., & Baer, R. (2009). How long does a mindfulness-based stress reduction program need to be? A review of class contact hours and effect sizes for psychological distress. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 65*(6), 34-45. doi:10.1002/jclp.20555

Carmody, J., & Baer, R., Lykins, E., & Olendzi, N. (2009). An empirical study of the mechanisms of mindfulness in a mindfulness-based stress reduction program. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 60*(0), 46-59. doi:10.1002/jclp.20579

Carson, S., & Langer, E. (2006). Mindfulness and self-acceptance. *Journal of Rational Emotive and Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, 24*(1), 29-43. doi:10.1007/s10942-006-0022-5

Clark, M., & Wilson, A. (1991). Context and rationality in Mezirow's theory of transformational learning. *Adult Education Quarterly, 41*, 75-85.

Cohen, A. (2009). *Gateway to the Dao-field: Essays for the awakening educator*. Amherst: NY: Cambria Press.

Collard, S., & Law, M. (1989). The limits of perspective transformation: A critique of Mezirow's theory *Adult Education Quarterly*, *39*(2), 99-107. doi:10.1177/0001848189039002004

Cox, T., & Mackay, C. J. (1985). The measurement of self-reported stress and arousal. *British Journal of Psychology*, *76*(2), 183-186. doi:10.1111/j.2044-8295.1985.tb01941.x

Cranton, P., & King, K. (2003). Transformative learning as a professional development goal. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 98, 31-37. doi:10.1002/ace.97

Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.

Datta, Y. (2010). Maslow's hierarchy of basic needs: An ecological view. *Oxford Journal*, *9*(1), 39-57.

Davidson, R. (2012). *The emotional life of your brain.* New York, NY: Hudson Street Press.

Davis, D., & Hayes, J. (2011). What are the benefits of mindfulness? A practice review of psychotherapy-related research. *Psychotherapy*, *48*(2), 198-208. doi:10.1037/a0022062

Dawson, J. (2003). Reflectivity, creativity, and the space for silence. *Reflective Practice*, *4*(1), 33-39. doi:10.1080/1462394032000053512

Delgado, L. C., Guerra, P., Perakakis, P., Viedma, M. I., Robles, H., & Vila, J. (2010). Human values education and mindfulness meditation as a tool for emotional regulation and stress prevention for teachers in an efficiency study. *Behavioural Psychology*, *18*(3), 511-532.

Demulder, E., & Rigsby, L. (2003). Teachers' voices on reflective practice. *Reflective Practice*, *4*(3), 267-290. doi:10.1080/1462394032000112192

Dewey, J. (1933). *How we think.* Boston, MA: D.C. Heath and Company.

Feldman, C., & Kuyken, W. (2011). Compassion in the landscape of suffering. *Contemporary Buddhism*, *12*(1), 143-155. doi:10.1080/14639947.2011.564831

Floden, R., & Huberman, M. (1989). Teachers' professional lives: The state of the art. *International Journal of Educational Research, 13*(4), 455-466. doi:10.1016/0883-0355(89)90040-2

Freese, A. (2006). Reframing one's teaching: Discovering our teacher selves through reflection and inquiry. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *22*, 100-119. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2005.07.003

Greenberg, J., Reiner, K., & Meiran, N. (2012). "Mind the trap": Mindfulness practice reduces cognitive rigidity. *PLoS ONE*, *7*(5), 1-8. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0036206

Guskey, T. (2002). Professional development and teacher change. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 8(3/4), 381-391. doi:10.1080/135406002100000512

Hamilton, M., Smith, L., & Worthington, K. (2008). Fitting the methodology with the research: An exploration of narrative, self-study and auto-ethnography. *Studying Teacher Education*, *4*(1), 17-28. doi:10.1080/17425960801976321

Hatton, N., & Smith, D. (1995). Reflection in teacher education: Towards definition and implementation. *Teaching & Teacher Education*, *11*(1), 33-49. doi:10.1016/0742-051X(94)00012-U

Heydenfeldt, J., Herkenhoff, L., & Coe, M. (2011). Cultivating mind fitness through mindfulness training: Applied neuroscience. *Performance Improvement, 50*(10), 21-28. doi:10.1002/pfi.20259

Hiatt, J., & Creasey, T. (2012). *Change management: The people side of change.* Loveland, CO: Prosci.

Holzel, B., Carmody, J., Vangel, M., Congleton, C., Yerramsetti, S., Gard, T., & Lazar, S. (2010). Mindfulness practice leads to increases in regional brain gray matter density. *Psychiatry Research: Neuroimaging, 191*(1), 36-43. doi:10.1016/j.pscychresns.2010.08.006

Hubball, H., Collins, J., & Pratt, D. (2005). Enhancing reflective teaching practices: Implications for faculty development programs. *The Canadian Journal of Higher Education, 35*(3), 57-81.

Huberman, M. (1989). The professional life cycle of teachers. *Teachers College Record, 91*(1), 31-57.

Jaeger, E. (2013). Teacher reflection: Supports, barriers, and results. *Issues in Teacher Education, 22*(1), 89-104.

Joerger, R. (2010). A description of Michael Huberman's teacher career cycle model. Retrieved from http://blogue.sdp-cmontmorency.profweb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/HubermanModel.pdf

Jones, J., & Jones, K. (2013). Teaching reflective practice: Implementation in the teacher education setting. *The Teacher Educator, 48*, 73-85.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990). *Full catastrophe living.* New York, NY: Delacorte Press.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (1994). *Wherever you go, there you are.* New York, NY: Hyperion.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2012). *Mindfulness for beginners.* Boulder, CO: Sounds True.

Kelly, G. (1955). *A theory of personality: The psychology of personal constructs*. New York, NY: Norton.

Keune, P., & Forintos, D. (2010). Mindfulness meditation: A preliminary study on meditation practice during everyday life activities and its association with well-being. *Psychological Topics*, *19*(2), 373-386.

Kidd, I. (1992). *Socratic questions*. In B. Gower & M. Stokes (Eds.), *Socratic questions: New essays on the philosophy of Socrates and its significance* (pp. 82-92). New York, NY: Routledge.

Kohn, A. (2004). *What does it mean to be well educated?* Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Koltko-Rivera, M. (2006). Rediscovering the later version of Maslow's hierarchy of needs: Self-transcendence and opportunities for theory, research, and unification. *Review of General Psychology*, *10*(4), 302-317. doi:10.1037/1089-2680.10.4.302

Kompf, M., & Bond, R. (2001). Critical reflection in adult education. In T. Barer-Stein & M. Kompf (Eds.), *The craft of teaching adults* (pp. 21-38). Toronto, ON: Irwin.

Koster, B., & van den Berg, B. (2014). Increasing self-understanding: Self-study research by teachers with the help of biography, core reflection and dialogue. *Studying Teacher Education*, *10*(1), 86-100. doi:10.1080/17425964.2013.866083

Kumar, K. (2011). Living out reflective practice. *Journal of Christian Nursing*, *28*(3), 139-143.

LaBoskey, V. (2004). The methodology of self-study and its theoretical underpinnings. In J. Loughran, M. Hamilton, V. LaBoskey, & T. Russell (Eds.), *International handbook of self-study of teaching practices* (pp. 817-869). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer.

Ludwig, D., & Kabat-Zinn, J. (2008). Mindfulness and medicine. *Journal of the American Medical Association, 300*(1), 60-62.

Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review, 50*(4), 370-396. doi:10.1037/h0054346

Maslow, A. H. (1968). *Toward a psychology of being.* New York, NY: D. Van Nostrand.

Maslow, A. H. (1970). *Religions, values, and peak experiences.* New York, NY: Penguin.

Maslow, A. H. (1987). *Motivation and personality.* New York, NY: Addison-Wesley.

Meiklejohn, J., Phillips, C., Freedman, M. L., Griffin, M., Biegel, G., Roach, A., … Saltzman, A. (2012). Integrating mindfulness training into K-12 education: Fostering the resilience of teachers and students. *Mindfulness, 3*(4), 291-307. doi:10.1007/s12671-012-0094-5

Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J. (1994). Understanding transformation theory. *Adult Education Quarterly, 44*(4), 222-232. doi:10.1177/074171369404400403

Mezirow, J. (1997). Transformative learning: Theory to practice. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 74*, 5-12. doi:10.1002/ace.7401

Mezirow, J., and Associates. (1990). *Fostering critical reflection in adulthood*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Miller, J. (2007). *The holistic curriculum.* Toronto, ON: OISE Press.

Miller, J. (2014). *The contemplative practitioner: Meditation in education and the workplace.* Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Murakami, H., Nakao, T., Matsunaga, M., Kasuya, Y., Shinoda, J., Yamada, J., & Ohira, H. (2012). The structure of the mindful brain. *PLoS ONE, 7*(9), 1-4. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0046377

Neher, A. (1991). Maslow's theory of motivation: A critique. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 31*(3), 89-112.

Nhất Hạnh, T. (1991). *Peace is every step: The path of mindfulness in everyday life*. New York, NY: Bantam.

Nhất Hạnh, T. (2006). *Understanding our mind.* Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press.

Nhất Hạnh, T. (2007). *The art of power.* New York, NY: Harper Collins.

Norton, C., Russell, A., Wisner, B., & Uriarte, J. (2011). Reflective teaching in social work education: Findings from a participatory action research study. *Social Work Education, 30*(4), 392-407. doi:10.1080/02615479.2010.500658

Oberg, K. (1960). Cultural shock: Adjustment to new cultural environments. *Missiology: An International Review, 7*(4), 177-182.

Ottesen, E. (2007). Reflection in teacher education. *Reflective Practice, 8*(1), 31-46.

Overholser, J. (2013). Guided discovery. *Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy, 43*, 73-82.

Palmer, P. J. (1998). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Posen, D. (2013). *Is work killing you?* Toronto, ON: Harper Collins.

Poulin, P., Mackenzie, C., Soloway, G., & Karayolas, E. (2008). Mindfulness training as an evidenced-based approach to reducing stress and promoting well-being among human services professionals. *International Journal of Health Promotion & Education*, *46*(2), 72-80. doi:10.1080/14635240.2008.10708132

Rezek, C. (2012). A mind to manage. *The International Journal of Leadership*, *8*(1), 33-38.

Rogers, R. (2001). Reflection in higher education: A concept analysis. *Innovative Higher Education*, *26*(1), 37-57. doi:10.1023/A:1010986404527

Rowan, J. (1999). Ascent and descent in Maslow's theory. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, *39*(3), 125-133. doi:10.1177/0022167899393010

Salzberg, S. (2011). Mindfulness and loving-kindness. *Contemporary Buddhism*, *12*(1), 165-175.

Salzberg, S. (2014). *Real happiness at work.* New York, NY: Workman Publishing.

Santorelli, S. (1999). *Heal thyself: Lessons on mindfulness in medicine*. New York, NY: Three Rivers Press.

Santorelli, S. (2011). "Enjoy your death": Leadership lessons forged in the crucible of organizational death and rebirth infused with mindfulness and mastery. *Contemporary Buddhism*, *12*(1), 199-217. doi:10.1080/14639947.2011.564839

Scaravelli, V. (1991). *Awakening the spine*. New York: NY: Harper Collins.

Schaefer, L. (2013). Beginning teacher attrition: A question of identity making and identity shifting. *Teachers and Teaching*, *19*(3), 260-274. doi:10.1080/13540602.2012.754159

Schön, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action.* New York, NY: Basic Books.

Schultz, K. (2012). The fullness of silence in the classroom. *Kappan*, *94*(2), 80.

Selye, H. (1976). *The stress of life* (2nd ed.) New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Siegel, D. J. (2007). *The mindful brain.* New York, NY: Norton.

Simmons, N. (2011). Caught with their constructs down? Teaching development in the pre-tenure years. *International Journal for Academic Development*, *16*(3), 229-241. doi:10.1080/1360144X.2011.596706

Simmons, N., & Daley, S. (2013). The art of thinking: Using collage to stimulate scholarly work. *The Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, *4*(1). doi:10.5206/cjsotl-rcacea.2013.1.2

Soloway, G., Poulin, P., & Mackenzie, C. (2010). Preparing new teachers for the full catastrophe of the 21st century classroom. In A. Cohan & A. Honigsfeld (Eds.), *Breaking the mold of pre-service and in-service teacher education* (pp. 219-227). Lanham, MD: R&L Education.

Soper, B., Milford, G., & Rosenthal, G. (1995). Belief when evidence does not support theory. *Psychology & Marketing*, *12*(5), 415-422. doi:10.1002/mar.4220120505

Talarico, S. (2001). Teaching as a vocation. In F. Stephenson (Ed.), *Extraordinary teachers* (pp. 67-72). Kansas City, MO: Andrews McMeel.

Teasdale, J., & Chaskalson, M. (2011). How does mindfulness transform suffering? *Contemporary Buddhism*, *12*(1), 103-124.

Tennant, M. (1993). Perspective transformation and adult development. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *44*(1), 34-42. doi:10.1177/0741713693044001003

Thomas, T. (1995). Acculturative stress in the adjustment of immigrant families. J*ournal of Social Distress and the Homeless*, *4*(2), 131-142. doi:10.1007/BF02094613

Tolle, E. (2005). *A new earth*. New York, NY: Dutton.

VanSlyke-Briggs, K. (2014). Embracing silence and the emptiness between unspoken words. *International Journal of Progressive Education, 10*(2), 37-42.

Venter, H., & Venter, E. (2010). Globalization and the psychology of the new world citizen: How the new global citizen compares to Maslow's level of self-transcendence. *The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences*, *5*(7), 29-35.

Wahba, M., & Bridwell, L. (1976). Maslow reconsidered: A review of research on the need hierarchy theory. *Organizational Behaviour and Human Performance, 15*, 212-240. doi:10.1016/0030-5073(76)90038-6

Walcott, D. (1987). *Collected poems.* Farrar, Strauss and Giroux.

Webster-Wright, A. (2013). The eye of the storm: A mindful inquiry into reflective practices in higher education. *Reflective Practice, 14*(4), 556-567. doi:10.1080/14623943.2013.810618

Williams, M., & Kabat-Zinn, J. (2011). Mindfulness: Diverse perspectives on its meaning, origins, and multiple applications at the intersection of science and dharma. *Contemporary Buddhism, 12*(1), 1-18. doi:10.1080/14639947.2011.564811

Yeganeh, B. (2012). Mindful leader. *Leadership Excellence, 29*(3), 7.

Yeganeh, B., & Kolb, D. (2009). Mindfulness and experiential learning. *OD Practitioner, 41*(3), 13-18.

Zajonc, A. (2006). Love and knowledge: Recovering the heart of learning through contemplation. *Teachers College Record, 108*(9), 1742-1759.